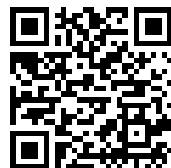

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INFANTRY

AN ACCOUNT OF THE 1ST GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT
DURING THE WAR 1914-1918

By

Brigadier-General A. W. Pagan
D.S.O., D.L.

ALDERSHOT

GALE & POLDEN LTD

1951

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FOREWORD

In the course of my service, I have served under Brigadier-General Pagan as a Company Commander and Second-in-Command in war, whilst in peace I was his Adjutant when he commanded the Depot after the 1914-18 War, so I can claim to know him intimately under varied conditions.

If it can be said that any man enjoyed a war, that man was Brigadier-General Pagan.

He hated the mud and squalor as much as anybody; to him casualties were a personal insult. Why, then, can it be said that he enjoyed the 1914-18 War when in command of the 28th? I think the answer is that he considered the whole thing as a challenge to his beloved 28th—a war within a war; and he was certain that he was the best man to ensure that that challenge was successfully met. He was right. This inspiration not only carried him through years of war with an unbroken nerve but gave him such immense satisfaction that, by and large, he enjoyed himself. When in 1918 he was more or less forced to take command of an infantry brigade, he no longer enjoyed the war. I know, as I commanded a battalion in Brigadier-General Pagan's Brigade.

As a Battalion Commander he was superb. Lucky 28th! This book is outstanding as a personal and living record of the doings of the 28th for the major portion of the 1914-18 War.

H. E. de R. WETHERALL, *Lieut.-General*.
Colonel, The Gloucestershire Regiment.

3rd February, 1951.

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EXPLANATION

THIS is the story of the 1st Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment—the 28th Foot—during a part of the war of 1914 to 1918.

On 4th August, 1914, the 28th was serving at Bordon in the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division. It went to France with the 1st Division, and having fought throughout the retreat from Mons, the advance to the Aisne and the first battle of Ypres, was withdrawn to the village of Oultersteene, three miles south west of Bailleul, where for the first time since landing in France it enjoyed a proper rest, an opportunity for recreation and reorganisation after three months of incessant marching and fighting. MAP 15

But the respite was short. At 5 p.m. on 20th December orders were received to march at 7 p.m. to restore the situation caused by the loss of our trenches north and south of Givenchy. Next day, after a seventeen-mile march in drenching mid-December storm, the 28th, with the remainder of the 3rd Brigade, attacked at Festubert over a low-lying marsh flooded by the winter rains. Its rifles, clogged with mud, were soon useless; the only result of the attack, apart from the casualties, was that the attackers lay in the morass at a distance from the enemy's position and gradually created a new line. After the event it is easy to see that the situation would have been most economically met by the formation of new entrenchments, without attempting, over such impossible ground, to recapture those that had been lost. MAP 1

This position was held until 7th January, 1915, and the Regiment then withdrew to Bethune till 12th January, on which date it took over trenches at Givenchy. MAP 3

CHAPTER I

GIVENCHY—MARLES-LES-MINES—FESTUBERT— NEUVE CHAPELLE—RICHEBOURG

ON 15th January, 1915, the date on which this narrative begins, only four officers remained who had served continuously with the 28th since the war began. The companies, whose average strength was ninety men, had in their ranks few who had landed in France with the Regiment, and most of the surplus reservists and the men of the 3rd Battalion, sent out as reinforcements, had also disappeared, while hardly any of those who had enlisted at the outbreak of war had yet reached France. The battalion was largely composed of "National Reservists," who had long since finished their service in the reserve; many of them had left the colours before the South African War. They received no retaining fee, but had contracted to serve on mobilisation in return for a prospective payment of £10. They were elderly gentlemen; they were not mobile; but they bore the brunt of that winter in our very amateur first attempts at fortified lines. They made tea and fried bacon all day and all night in rain and frost and snow, without dugouts or shelters, and up to their knees in horrible slush; their cheerfulness was proof against every hardship.

The line lay just east of the village of Givenchy and consisted of a narrow ditch, deep in mud and water; there were no support or communication trenches. The only revetting materials available were a few sandbags, but shift was made with the doors of houses, iron bedsteads and the like to prevent the trench from collapsing entirely, and a couple of pumps, found beneath the mud, were used to lessen the water. Owing to the conditions sleep was impossible; he was a lucky man who, squatting on an upturned bucket in one of the drier places, could indulge in an uneasy doze. Fortunately braziers, firewood and food were abundant. In places the enemy's line was less than 100 yards away, and though incessant rifle fire caused heavy loss, principally through head wounds to sentries, little hostile shelling took place; but our guns shot most effectively. There were many rumours,

as was common at the time, of enemy snipers stationed in rear of our trenches, and these improbable tales were apparently believed by people of sufficiently high rank to have known better.

Battalion Headquarters was in a house on the south bank of the Aire-La Bassée Canal, close to an iron bridge called Pont Fixe, which, though smashed by shell fire, was still passable by infantry. The line was held by two companies, with one in battalion reserve and one in brigade reserve. "A" relieved "B" on the right, and "C" relieved "D" on the left, the reliefs being carried out on alternate nights at the unearthly hour of 4 a.m.; the company relieved stood by at Battalion Headquarters till 7 a.m. and then went to its billets.

"A" and "B" Companies, when out of the line, were in battalion reserve and lodged in Harley Street, a road leading from the Béthune-La Bassée road to Pont Fixe. The houses were comfortable enough, but they were sprayed with bullets day and night, and these "overthrows" from the trenches, though rarely causing casualties, certainly detracted from the ease of the resting troops; later in the tour the battalion reserve was moved to the north side of the canal. "C" and "D," in brigade reserve, were billeted in the hamlet of Le Preol, situated at the junction of the Beuvry and the Aire-La Bassée Canals, only two and a half miles from the line; but the march was tiresome, for after forty-eight hours without sleep or shelter the troops moved slowly. In Le Preol the men's billets were bad, and a large quantity of flax straw, the value of which was not realised, was requisitioned to increase their comfort; correspondence on the subject continued for at least two years. The officers had a comfortable room in an estaminet, its stone floor plentifully covered with straw. The pleasure derived from one's arrival in these billets and the joy of forty-eight hours' complete and utter rest were only equalled by the extreme distaste caused by parading at 2.30 a.m. to return to the line.

On 25th January the enemy interrupted the routine by trying to capture Givenchy. For several days the rumour of a hostile attack in celebration of the German Emperor's birthday had been prevalent in the trenches, and on the night of 24th January there was a vast amount of noise, singing and shouting in the enemy's line opposite the Regiment. "A" Company was in the line on the right, "D" being on the left; "B" Company was in battalion reserve, and "C" was in brigade reserve at Le Preol.

Heavy shelling of the line, the village and the ground between the village and Le Preol began at 6.45 a.m.; at 7.30 a.m. the Germans left their trenches and advanced against ours. Opposite the Regiment the attack was half-hearted and was repulsed quite easily. The Germans came over in considerable numbers but then drifted aimlessly across our front, apparently making for the road leading from Givenchy to Rue de Marais and for a small orchard away to our left. Heavy casualties were inflicted on them with small loss to ourselves, though both Captain H. C. Richmond, a highly educated staff officer who should not have been commanding a company in the line at this stage of the war, and Captain W. K. George, also of "D" Company, were killed. Farther to the left, on the front of another battalion, about seventy Germans broke through; they got into the village and a little way down the street leading southwards to the canal. Here they met a working party of the 1st Black Watch, which dealt with them with the bayonet. This break-through occasioned some anxiety, and our left, though never in any real danger, was reinforced by "B" Company.

Meantime "C" Company, having left its freshly cooked breakfasts to be enjoyed by the troops of the 2nd Division that were moving up in reserve, was standing by near Brigade Headquarters, a cottage on the canal bank, and suffered from fire aimed at one of our big guns, which was shooting from a railway mounting on the other side of the canal. Second-Lieutenant W. R. N. Leslie, who had only been with the battalion for six days, No. 8925 Sergeant Woodward and three men were killed; Captain W. P. S. Foord and three men were wounded. Captain Foord recovered slowly and was in England for nearly a year; he returned to command the 14th Battalion of the Regiment with notable success and at the end of the war was a brigadier in the 11th Division. "C" Company moved under heavy shell fire but without further loss to a spoil heap 500 yards south-west of Givenchy Church and then to Orchard Farm; the fortification of the latter kept it busy.

By the evening the situation had quieted down, and never, opposite the 3rd Brigade, had the attack any chance of success. The condition of the ground was against it, and though the enemy advanced in large numbers they showed neither dash nor determination.

After this affair the line was held uneventfully, except for the

MAP 1 vileness of the weather, until 3rd February, when the 1st Division was withdrawn for a most necessary rest. The Regiment went out to Marles-les-Mines, a mining village six or seven miles west of Béthune. "C" Company, in brigade reserve at the time of relief, marched comfortably to Marles by way of Béthune, Labeuvriere and Lapugnoy and got in by daylight, but the remainder did not arrive until 4.30 a.m. on 4th February.

The new surroundings of the Regiment were pleasant enough despite many slag heaps and mine buildings. The undulating country was dotted with small coverts, and just east of the village lay the Bois des Dames, a magnificent wood of mixed trees.

The billets first occupied were draughty and uncomfortable, but by degrees most of the men were lodged, two or three together, in private houses. The village consisted almost entirely of miners' cottages with a few farms on the outskirts, and when the men had been extricated from the dilapidated barns of the farms, from the lofts of the village school and from the goods yards of the station and had been put into the cottages, they were quite comfortable. Once the fashion of putting up soldiers in their houses had been established among the inhabitants the supply did not equal the demand; numerous miners' children were bitterly disappointed by the refusal of their requests for "Cinq ou six soldats." The people were very friendly. They got on well with the men—Gloucestershire men always get on well with everyone—and looked after them, in some cases even going so far as to clean their boots for them in the morning.

A good deal of elementary training was carried out though the weather was indifferent. Considerable time was wasted at digging practice, as it always was when training was in progress during rest periods. This digging was probably ordered by a commander so high as not to have intimate knowledge of the ordinary routine of the infantry. When in the line, and on working parties while in support and reserve, the soldier shifted a huge number of cubic feet of earth every month, and what he did not know about digging was not worth knowing. Most men could have been entrusted, provided that the trenches were sited for them, with the layout. No one knew better than the private soldier the value of a good fat traverse.

The men were paid regularly once a week, which had not happened since the war began. At this period an odd and

irregular custom had crept into the battalion. N.C.Os. were promoted in their companies without reference to their places on the battalion roll. For instance, if a sergeant became a casualty or was promoted, his vacancy was filled by a corporal in the same company although there might be in other companies a dozen corporals who were senior. It is difficult to tell how this method came to be adopted; probably it began during the chaos of the battles of 1914; it was abolished for good in May 1915.

Baths were available at Fosse 3 at Bruay; they were badly needed as the men had had none since early in January. Clean clothes were also issued, but not clean service dress, which was almost equally necessary. However, hot irons for treating the seams of jackets and trousers were provided; the result of their application to some of the garments resembled the crackle of musketry.

An inter-platoon shooting competition, won by No. 12 Platoon, was carried out on the French rifle range in the Bois des Dames. "A" Company beat "C" Company at football by 3 tries to 2 in a match played on a most diminutive field. In fact, despite the weather, everyone enjoyed himself remarkably well.

A draft of 210 men had been received while the Regiment was at Givenchy; at Marles, further reinforcements amounting to 428 men arrived. Some of these were casualties of the Aisne and Ypres, now recovered, but the great majority were men who had enlisted at the outbreak of war, the best of England's manhood. Thus the 28th was up to strength again, and since a number of experienced officers remained, only required—which it did not get—two or three months' hard training to become, once more, an efficient fighting machine.

Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Lovett was in command, Major G. F. Gardiner was Second-in-Command, and Lieutenant D. Duncan was Adjutant. The companies were commanded as follows: "A" Company, Captain R. D. Scott; "B" Company, Captain A. St. J. Blunt; "C" Company, Captain A. W. Pagan; "D" Company, Captain F. C. Finch.

On 24th February Major Gardiner succeeded Colonel Lovett, who was compelled by the state of his health to return to England, where he had a brigade till the end of the war. He was a fine commander and was devoted to the Regiment; he will ever be remembered by those who served under him during the arduous

days of the retreat, the advance to the Aisne and the terrific fighting at Ypres.

While at Marles the Regiment was inspected by the brigadier, General R. H. Butler, by the divisional general, Major-General R. C. Haking, and by the corps commander, Lieutenant-General C. C. Monro. The turn-out and drill at these inspections were excellent; General Monro was particularly pleased and said so. General Butler was appointed Brigadier-General, General Staff, First Army, on 21st February; he was succeeded on 23rd February by Brigadier-General H. R. Davies of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry.

MAP 2 On 24th February the rest period at Marles ended, and the Regiment went to Béthune on its way to the line, marching via Labeuvriere and Annezin to the Ecole des Jeunes Filles—now bereft of its proper inhabitants—and billeting there for the night. The Commanding Officer preceded the battalion in order to visit the new trenches; he rejoined at Bethune in the evening. Next afternoon "C" and "D" Companies paraded at 2 p.m. and marched to relieve the reserve companies of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers of the 2nd Division, followed at 4 p.m. by "A" and "B," which relieved the front line companies of the same regiment.

MAP 1 The line was part of the Festubert defences and ran, north and south, about 500 yards east of the hamlet of Le Plantin; it was reached by way of the Aire-La Bassée Canal bank and then by Gorre and the Tuning Fork. Owing to the waterlogged state of the ground the trenches that had existed when the Regiment was here in 1914 had been replaced by breastworks, consisting of solid earthen walls, well revetted with sandbags but containing many gaps. The troops lived behind these walls, which in most places were sufficiently high to conceal them from the enemy. There was a lack of shelters, though several were made during the eleven days that the line was held. The enemy had also replaced his wet ditches with breastworks, which, like ours, were not continuous. After dark each side employed large working parties to complete the defences; consequently rifle and shell fire only occurred when provoked by daylight activity near the gaps and low places. Our reliefs were still carried out at 4 a.m. on alternate days; each company did forty-eight hours in and forty-eight hours out. The system of early morning reliefs was purely regimental and was discontinued

after this tour in the trenches; it had certain good points but was infinitely more fatiguing than the ordinary routine: relief soon after dark, or, if possible, in the afternoon in daylight.

"A" and "C" Companies relieved each other on the right, MAP 3
"B" and "D" on the left. The companies holding the line had two platoons in the front breastworks by day and three at night. The remaining platoons were in the most easterly houses of Le Plantin, close behind the breastworks that they would occupy in the event of attack. The companies in reserve were billeted in ruined cottages about 1,500 yards from the line, on the roads running from the Tuning Fork to Le Plantin. All these billets were damp and uncomfortable, because few of the cottages had either roofs or cellars. The line itself was a sea of slush; the roads were morasses. The reserve companies provided 200 men every night to work on the breastworks and, with hurdles and suchlike, to make paths behind them.

The weather continued to be wet and cold with a good deal of snow and frost, but the conditions in the line were an improvement on those at Givenchy. The sun shone sometimes, there was an occasional feeling of spring in the air, and the birds were beginning to sing. There were casualties nightly among the working parties, but few apart from these. Among the numerous graves found in the village was that of No. 7866 Company Sergeant-Major James, who had scored the try that won the Army Rugby Cup for the 2nd Battalion in 1910. He had come back from the reserve as a corporal, had been rapidly promoted and was killed in December 1914. Several of those killed in the same attack still lay between the lines, and some of them were brought in for burial.

This routine continued till 7th March when the 28th, relieved by the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers and the 4th Royal Welch Fusiliers, moved back into brigade reserve. Headquarters, "C" MAP 1
and "D" Companies went to Gorre, and "A" and "B" to houses on the Southern Arm of the Tuning Fork. The billets at Gorre were abominable, but most of the men were found better ones after the first night. From Gorre it was pleasant to walk along the canal bank into Béthune, where very hot baths could be got in the various bathing establishments.

However, our attack at Neuve Chapelle on 10th March soon put a stop to trips in search of baths; it caused the whole of the 1st Division to be kept in readiness to exploit any success that

might be gained. From 9th March onwards the Regiment had to be ready to move at ten minutes' notice, and by day a senior officer was always at Divisional Headquarters at Loigne for the purpose of taking orders. Apparently the reserve battalions were to be used directly by the division without intervention by the brigade. This liaison job at Divisional Headquarters was popular; a whisky and soda at lunch and a glass of port afterwards were appreciated at a time when the strongest drink available in a company mess was, as a rule, cocoa. Less popular was it when, on the night of 10th March, the company commanders were summoned to Battalion Headquarters, there to sit in a cold room in the dark, seething with indignation, until brigade orders arrived at 1 a.m. Such procedure was probably necessary on this occasion, but it is, and should be, unusual.

The attack, successful to begin with, gradually petered out, and the 1st Division was never used in it. On 14th March the 3rd Brigade moved back into divisional reserve. The 28th, after being relieved by the 2nd/60th and the 5th Royal Sussex, marched to Hinges, going through Gorre, along the canal bank and through Béthune. The last two days at Gorre had been dry and much warmer; after leaving Béthune there was actually dust blowing along the roads. It was really delightful to see dust again.

Hinges was a jolly village on a hill, very English in appearance with its fields, trees and hedgerows. The hill was only 130 feet above sea level, but compared with the flat plain that surrounded it, appeared to be a mountain. Battalion Headquarters was in the village; "A" and "B" Companies were in the outlying cottages called Pont l'Hinges; "C" and "D" were in farms on the high ground at Le Vertannoy. The weather during the stay at Hinges was warm and springlike; the rest, in good billets, was enjoyed by everyone. The hawthorn hedges were getting green, the country was drying up, and the thought of some months of dry trenches was very cheering. The men got baths and clean clothes, and various higher commanders made inspections of the battalion. Mild training and route marching were done, and a few football matches were played. A boxing meeting was held; some delay in getting a machine with which to weigh the boxers was caused by no one knowing the necessary French word.

This period of rest ended on Monday, 22nd March, and the battalion paraded at 11 a.m. to return to the line. The long and

tiring march, over bad roads, led by Le Vertbois Farm to Vieille Chapelle and thence across the River Lawe to a collection of houses at a road junction named Rouge Croix on the main Estaires—La Bassée road, where the greater part of the Regiment was billeted, with "C" Company in a vast old farm at the next road junction to the south. The billets were not pleasant because they were considerably shelled; "C" Company's ancient farm would otherwise have been a charming place. That evening the Commanding Officer, with the Company Commanders, went up to view the trenches that were to be taken over on the morrow; next evening a battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment was relieved in the line immediately east of the village of Neuve Chapelle, behind breastworks that had been erected where our advance during the recent fighting had been finally checked. MAP 4

Some parts of these breastworks were good, others were indifferent, while in places the only protection was canvas, painted to resemble breastworks. As enemy snipers in the houses on the western edge of the Bois du Biez were extremely offensive, great care had to be exercised by day; to improve matters, much hard work was done at night. In the portion of the line held by "C" Company it was particularly necessary to keep close to the parapet and to hasten past the low places. Early on the morning of 24th March, before this had been properly realised, several casualties occurred. These included both the Company Commander, who, proceeding somewhat aimlessly about his business, had strayed beyond the margin of safety, and Second-Lieutenant H. R. Russell, who was hit when outside his shelter. The latter was at Oxford when the war began and immediately joined the 3rd Battalion of the Regiment, where he did exceptional work before going to France. Here he was sent by the Base authorities to another regiment in the 3rd Brigade whence he was retrieved with difficulty. When he had recovered from his wound he was sent to the 10th Battalion, and all efforts to get him back to the 28th failed. He was killed at Loos on 13th October, 1915. He was a good example of an old head on young shoulders; in addition to which his exceptional personal bravery and his care for his men made him a good leader.

The trenches were held with all four companies in the front line. Each company had one platoon in support, lodged in dugouts and short lengths of trench along the main street of

Neuve Chapelle at its northern end. Battalion Headquarters was in one of the most northerly houses of the village. The weather had not lived up to the high hopes formed of it, frosts and cold winds being prevalent; yet the spell in the line was not unpleasant, and there was certainly more comfort than in the trenches previously held. After the first morning casualties were few. One night an American war correspondent named Frederic Palmer was sent up by General Headquarters to spend a night in the line with the Regiment. He enjoyed himself immensely and was thrilled with everything. Two chapters of his book "My Year of War" are devoted to this visit. Mr. Palmer, when his country joined in the war, commanded a battalion in the American Army.

The line was held until 26th March, on which date, after being relieved by the 2nd Welch Regiment and the 4th Royal Welch Fusiliers, the Regiment withdrew to support trenches directly behind Neuve Chapelle, about half a mile from the front line. They were part of the old German line and had been heavily shelled during our attack on March 10th; though there were a number of fairly good dugouts, the actual trenches, where many of the men had to live, were very wet. Dead Germans abounded, and the dugouts were lousy. The place had been badly neglected by those who had lived there since it became British territory, and much work was necessary to make it habitable. Derelict pumps were mended and used to get rid of the water. The weather soon became intensely cold with an icy northerly gale and hard frost, which dried up the country, but made it cold for sleeping with no covering but a greatcoat. In order to get washing water the ice on the shell-holes had to be broken with pickaxes. There was a good deal of hostile shelling, three or four times a day, with biggish stuff. Large working parties were found each night to construct reserve breastworks to the Neuve Chapelle line.

The Regiment continued in reserve until 31st March, on which day it took over the Port Arthur sector of the line from the 1st South Wales Borderers. The sector was that next but one south of Neuve Chapelle. Here the Regiment was once more in good deep trenches, the dugouts and shelters of which were fairly habitable, though much enloused. Three companies were in the line; "B" on the right, "C" in the centre and "D" on the left. Headquarters and "A" Company were at Port Arthur

itself, a redoubt formed about the ruins of an estaminet at the junction of the Rue du Bois and the La Bassée-Estaires road. In front of the line, one in "B" Company's portion and one in that of "C," were two lengths of breastwork, 150 to 200 yards forward, at which work had to be done at night with a view to extending them and thus eventually forming a new line. The portion in "C" Company's sector was occupied by a section of the Company; it was reached by a shallow trench, screened with painted canvas, which it was no joke to traverse by daylight. The work at these breastworks was much interfered with by German snipers, and the enemy shelled our trenches accurately with big shells. The weather varied; it was generally much warmer and more pleasant, though there was a lot of rain. The 47th Division was attached to the 1st Division for instruction, as was the custom when such a unit first arrived in France; for a day or two one of the companies of the 22nd London Regiment took the place of "D" Company in the line. "D" Company remained in close support. At 4.30 a.m. on 3rd April, in accordance with orders from above, all the troops in the line opened three bursts of rapid fire at the opposing trenches. The object of this manœuvre was not known to the firers; however, it annoyed the Germans, who shelled our trenches at frequent intervals until 11.30 a.m., causing a number of casualties.

The relief by the 1st Northamptonshire Regiment began on the evening of 7th April, but owing to one of the relieving companies getting lost the last company of the 28th only just got out of the line in time to avoid staying in for another day; it did not reach its billets, in farms west of Locon, until 8.45 a.m. on 8th April, after a weary march. No one was sorry to get back to billets again after sixteen days spent in the dirt and discomfort of Neuve Chapelle and Port Arthur, during which time 45 casualties were suffered. The billets near Locon were crowded both for officers and men, but the country was pleasant, the fields were full of cowslips, and the weather was fine. The people were friendly, except those at Battalion Headquarters: two old ladies, both over eighty years of age and as cross as two sticks. The men did not get baths, though they needed them badly after their long spell in unclean places.

On 15th April the Regiment returned to the line and took over from the 1st Cameron Highlanders of the 1st Brigade trenches that lay about 300 yards south-east of the village street

MAP 1

MAP 4

of Richebourg l'Avoué. The foremost line, which it was intended eventually to link up with the unfinished breastworks at Port Arthur, was new and incomplete. Here the Regiment stayed for eight days, the companies—two in the front line, one in support just behind, and the other in reserve—relieving each other every forty-eight hours. Headquarters and the reserve company were in pleasant orchards behind the village, rather exposed to “overs” from the line. The losses, 4 killed and 23 wounded, were mostly caused by these and by German retaliation to the fire of our trench mortars, of which there were two brands, one the pet of a gunner and the other of an infantryman. These lunatics—no other word describes them—descended daily into the line, fired a few rounds and then withdrew; they would have been more popular had they remained to deal with the situation that they invariably created. The weather was so delightful that the discomforts of trench life were greatly ameliorated.

The War Diary for 19th April records that there were present with the battalion 34 N.C.Os. and 82 men who had served continuously during the campaign. The large proportion of N.C.Os. is, of course, due to a number of men being promoted who had begun the war as privates.

On 22nd April the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers relieved the 28th, which went into brigade reserve: Headquarters, “B” and
 MAP 1 “D” Companies to farms about Le Touret, “A” and “C” to the uninhabited village of Richebourg St. Vaast, which was little damaged, though there were vast shell-holes in the churchyard, and where the billets and beds were excellent. On the 24th each half-battalion marched back to its old billets in Hinges and for ten happy days did gentle training in and about the village. The weather was balmy, and nightingales, under a red moon set in a cloudless sky, practised their uncertain song all night; the fields, with their elms, whose branches showed dark through a mist of the palest green, their hedges and bright spring grass, reminded one of England; a great chestnut,* shading a road junction near Le Vertannoy, was in full leaf. No one was pleased to shift, on 3rd May, to the main Locon-Béthune road, just south of Locon, for the billets were dirty, and incessant lorry and other traffic covered everything with dust.

* Three years later, it was sad to see this chestnut again, standing, a battered stump, in a waste of shell-holes.

CHAPTER II

THE ATTACK ON THE AUBERS RIDGE—THE BRICK-STACKS AT CUINCHY—CAMBRIN—THE TRENCHES SOUTH OF THE BETHUNE-LA BASSEE ROAD

THE stage was now set for the battle of the Aubers Ridge. The secret of the proposed British attack had been very well kept, at any rate from our own side. On 5th May the ordinary routine was carried out; the companies practised wood fighting in the Bois de Pacaut, while the company commanders explored reserve lines in the neighbourhood of Le Touret; life seemed as placid as the weather was warm. But in the evening the Commanding Officer and the Adjutant were summoned to Brigade Headquarters, where the plan of the battle was disclosed to them. MAP I

Since the attack at Festubert the 28th had been employed in holding trenches. This work had been varied by spells in support and reserve, often in very pleasant places, and by a much needed rest at Marles. The conditions in the line had generally been severe owing to extremely cold and wet weather, but at least there were periods away from the trenches; the continuous fighting, day after day without relief, which prevailed at the first Ypres battle, no longer existed. During March and April a further 131 men had arrived as reinforcements, making a total of 749 received since 19th January. During the period of trench warfare lasting from 12th January until the Aubers Ridge battle, 4 officers and 24 men had been killed, and 4 officers and 134 men had been wounded.

The attack on the Aubers Ridge was carried out by the First British Army, consisting of the 1st, 4th and Indian Corps. The 1st Corps was composed of the 1st,* 2nd and 47th Divisions, the 4th Corps of the 7th, 8th and 49th Divisions, the Indian Corps of the Meerut, Lahore and 51st Divisions. The first objective of the attack was the line Rue de Marais-Lorgies-La Cliqueterie Farm-Fromelles. The second objective was the line Bauvin-Don.

* At this time each brigade of the 1st Division contained five battalions the extra one, in each case, being a Territorial battalion.

MAP 4 The 3rd Brigade was to attack from our line immediately in front of Richebourg l'Avoué, with its right on the cinder track running from the village to the Festubert-La Tourelle road. Its first objective was the said road; its second objectives were Rue de Marais and Lorgies. The bombardment of the enemy's line was to become intense at 5.30 a.m. on the day of the attack, and the assaulting battalions, 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers on the right and 2nd Welch on the left, were to advance at 5.40 a.m., to capture the enemy's trenches and to occupy and consolidate the first objective. The 4th Royal Welch Fusiliers was to follow the assaulting battalions, to clear the captured trenches and then to hold them. At the same time the reserve battalions, 1st Gloucestershire on the right, 1st South Wales Borderers on the left, were to leave their position in our fourth-line trenches, close to the village street, and to move above ground to the front line, there to await orders from the Brigadier to advance. On receipt of these orders, they were, after passing through the assaulting battalions, to occupy to the second objectives, the Gloucestershire taking Rue de Marais, the South Wales Borderers Lorgies. In the light of the experience gained later in the war this was a tremendous task for a brigade consisting of five battalions. A glance at the map reveals the number of large farms and groups of cottages, each a potential fortress, with which the area was studded; and the final objective consisted of two considerable villages, each of which was allotted to a single battalion.

On 6th May the Commanding Officer and the Company Commanders of the 28th went to Richebourg l'Avoué to reconnoitre the ground over which the attack was to take place. A regimental concert was held in the evening in Locon at which General Haking, the divisional commander, was present.

The operations had been ordered for 8th May; at 7 p.m. on 7th May the Regiment had actually paraded to march to the position of assembly, when orders were received that the attack had been postponed for twenty-four hours and that the 28th was to go to billets round Lannoy and Gonneghem, at least three miles farther from the battlefield. The Regiment moved off at once, and the men were in their billets, in large farms amid lush meadows, by midnight. At 6.30 p.m. next evening the forward move took place, and Richebourg l'Avoué was reached at 11.30 p.m. by way of Hinges, Locon and Lacouture, after

a march of eleven miles; the remainder of the night was spent in drawing bounbs, respirators, rations and other stores.

On 9th May the Regiment was commanded by Captain A. W. Pagan (Major Gardiner having gone to the base, sick, on 6th May) with Captain G. B. Bosanquet as Adjutant. The companies were commanded as follows: "A," Captain R. D. Scott; "B," Captain A. St. J. Blunt; "C," Captain F. C. Finch; "D," Captain F. J. Brodigan.

It was a delightfully fresh spring morning with a cloudless sky when the Munsters and Welch left their trenches to move to the position in which they were to await the lifting of the barrage. They were immediately greeted by a storm of machine-gun and rifle fire; our bombardment had no effect on the enemy as far as keeping him under cover was concerned. Yet at 5.40 a.m. these brave battalions again went forward. Some of the Munsters, led by their commanding officer, disappeared into the enemy's trench; but the attack, crumbling under the hail of bullets, came to a standstill.

Meantime the Welch Fusiliers, followed by the Gloucestershire and South Wales Borderers, moved into our two front-line trenches, all of them losing heavily on the way. When the Regiment got into the foremost trench, it was already full of men, principally Welch Fusiliers, who, having nothing to mop up, naturally remained in the trench. It was obvious that the attack had failed.

Yet the 28th and the South Wales Borderers were ordered to repeat it at once, after a further very short bombardment. The Regiment was disposed with "C" Company on the right, "B" on the left and "D" in support; "A" Company was detached to carry stores for the Royal Engineers. The congested state of the trench made it impossible, in the time available, to organise the attack. At 7 a.m. a portion of the front-line companies started; the remainder followed when they saw their comrades going over the parapet. The advance, met immediately by overwhelming machine-gun fire, only continued for forty or fifty yards. The survivors formed a line and eventually got orders to withdraw, the guns covering the retirement. Some men got back, and others remained where they were till dark. "C" Company lost 2 officers and 60 men; "B" had fewer casualties.

Orders were next received to go back to our third-line trench,

and there, at 11 a.m., fresh orders arrived directing the Regiment to repeat the attack at 2.40 p.m., the hour being afterwards altered to 4 p.m. Now, except for wounded and dead, the front trench was less congested. "D" Company moved up on the right, "A," which had returned from the Engineers, on the left, with "C" and "B" in support. By this time the German artillery was plastering our position with every kind of missile, entirely out-doing our own so-called barrages, and communication was extremely difficult. However, at 4 p.m., "D" and "A" Companies went over, only to be greeted by intense small-arms fire, many of the German machine guns being on the parapets of the enemy's trenches. "D" Company, gallantly led by Captain Brodigan, got forward about 120 yards, some of the men being killed on the enemy's wire, and lost all its officers, most of its N.C.Os. and about 90 men. "A" Company did not advance so far. A retirement was once again ordered, and such men as could get back to our trenches. As soon as it was dark parties went out to look for wounded, a number of whom were brought in.

MAP I That evening the Regiment was relieved by a battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment of the 2nd Division and at midnight had assembled in the Rue des Berceaux, just north of Richebourg l'Avoué, whence it was ordered to proceed to Le Touret, there to be met by a staff officer from the Division to direct it to its billets. Le Touret was reached at 3.15 a.m., but the staff officer was not forthcoming. The Regiment remained on the roadside till 5.15 a.m., while the Adjutant, on a bicycle, looked for the billets. These eventually turned out to be the farms near Locon that had been occupied in mid-April. Everyone was glad of their shelter.

The total casualties in the Battalion on 9th May were 11 officers and 253 other ranks. Of these, Captain Brodigan, who died so well at the head of "D" Company, was at the depot when the war began; he had only joined the 28th in March. Captain Brodigan was an enthusiastic aviator and for some years had spent his leave at Farman's flying school in Paris; he was the two hundredth Englishman to obtain a pilot's certificate. Captain Bosanquet was wounded at the head of the Regiment during the first attack; although his arm was broken he came back to Headquarters just before the afternoon attack, and it was with difficulty that his desire to go over again with the Regiment was

discouraged. Only two of the "Honours and Awards" recommended for officers and men of the 28th were granted, yet innumerable deeds worthy of recognition were performed; they will not be forgotten by those who saw them done.

The attack was as unsuccessful elsewhere as it was on the front of the 1st Division.

The success gained in the early stages of the Neuve Chapelle battle had encouraged the belief that the German line could be broken by the same tactics and with the same expenditure of ammunition. But the enemy, having learnt his lesson, was not to be caught napping again. His positions had been enormously strengthened since the beginning of March; the attack was not, this time, a surprise to him. The power of our artillery was nothing like sufficient to overcome his small-arms fire, and directly our troops crossed their parapets he was up and at them; our barrages did not deter him in the least. There was no covering rifle or machine-gun fire on our part, no attempt at progress by means of fire and movement, and once the artillery bombardment had failed, in these lay the only chance of success. This want of co-operation between attacking bodies of troops—it grew worse as the war went on, only improving as the cult of the bomb declined and with the methods of attack inaugurated in 1917—was due partly to lack of training and partly to the fact that the attacker had to cross a parapet, then to be immediately at close quarters with a foe who had no flank, but to whose flanking and enfilade fire he was continually exposed. Hence the "Hurroosh" method of attack prevalent on both sides until the later stages of the war, when continuous trenches were less frequent in the areas where the big battles took place.

The attack had definitely failed when our early advance was checked. The later efforts, launched haphazard owing to lack of time for preparation, were certain to fail; their only result was the loss of a large quantity of the finest material available—the men who enlisted directly war was declared—which would have produced many valuable junior leaders.

The Regiment was not left long at Locon to lick its wounds. This time the billets were far less crowded, but the two old ladies at Headquarters were as cross as ever. Those who had time to spare spent Monday, 10th May, in rest and sleep; Tuesday, on the afternoon of which the Commanding Officer was sent over to the 1st Brigade Headquarters at Le Preol to be

shown new trenches at Cuinchy, passed in sorting and reorganising the sections and platoons. Next day the Regiment set out for the new trenches, marching via Béthune and Beuvry and halting for the midday meal on the high ground between these places, whence could be seen to the south the bursting shells of the French attacks at Souchez and Givenchy en Gohelle.

MAP 3 The new bit of line, the southern portion of the Cuinchy Section, lay immediately north of the Béthune-La Bassée road. The trenches ran among numerous large stacks of bricks, and the German forward position was dotted with similar stacks; the factory that produced them had long been demolished. A long communication trench, paved with bricks, led from Harley Street to the line, and there was a separate trench for exit, an arrangement that prevented much congestion. The front-line trenches, which were occupied by two companies with another in support, were commodious and good. The remaining company was in Stafford Redoubt on the main road. Battalion Headquarters was in a pleasant cottage, with excellent dugouts adjoining it, in a lane leading from Harley Street to the road beside which stood the church. Cuinchy must have been an attractive village; the church was embowered with trees, which were almost undamaged. The line was peaceful except for the explosion of mines on the French front, south of the road. The debris of one mine, exploded 200 or 300 yards away, actually caused casualties in our trenches.

MAP 1 The 28th was settling down here very comfortably when its peace was disturbed late at night on 13th May by orders to relieve the French beyond the road next day. At 5 a.m. on 14th May the Regiment marched to Sailly la Bourse, where the men were dumped in billets while the Commanding Officer and Company Commanders, after attending a conference at the Chateau des Pres between General Haking and the Commander of the French division to be relieved, went off to explore the new trenches. They then fetched the battalion, and despite the facts that none of the Frenchmen holding the line spoke a word of English and that our interpreter was not available, the relief was triumphantly effected by 7 p.m. after a strenuous day. It was interesting to observe the very close liaison that existed between the French field artillery and their infantry. Even allowing that the Frenchmen at this time were quicker than us with their map references, it was remarkable how rapidly their guns got going

when the infantry was annoyed by the enemy. The amount of ammunition available for retaliation made one envious, for our artillery could spare very few rounds a day for the purpose. However, the much maligned *Daily Mail* had already begun its agitation for an adequate supply, and this helped more than anything else to correct a state of affairs that would soon have lost the war.

The new sector, that next but one south of the Béthune—La Bassée road, was of considerable depth. Its magnificent dugouts were far superior to any that the Regiment had yet occupied, and the excellent trenches were well drained and well revetted. On the front of the right company was the mine that had been blown when the 28th was in the Guinchy trenches. The French had made no effort to occupy the lip of the crater nearest to our line; therefore, while the sector was held, "C" Company dug out to the crater and established a post on it, a most necessary precaution. Shell fire and rifle fire were not severe; the enemy's trenches were close to ours. Battalion Headquarters was a charming little underground, two-roomed cottage with a roof of curved iron. In front, opening on to the trench, was a partially roofed veranda, with seats on three sides of it, from which steps led down into the house; the whole was painted pale blue. The walls and roof of the living room were papered, and everywhere were polished shell cases full of lilac. The French certainly made themselves comfortable in the line. This residence was called "Villa Beau Terrier"; its only drawback was its distance, about 1,000 yards by communication trench, from the front line. MAP 5

This tour ended on 18th May, and after relief by the 2nd Welch the Regiment moved into brigade reserve in and about the village of Cambrin, leaving "A" Company in shelters dug in a bank close to the Maison Rouge. The weather was now fine and warm. The men were badly in need of a change of clothes; baths and fresh clothes at this period of the war were few and far between, and many of the men had thrown away their shirts owing to their lousy condition. Friends of the Regiment had been very good in sending out shirts, but the supply from private sources could never equal the demand. We had not yet realised how necessary was the care of billets, continually used by successions of regiments, during the long drawn out war of the trenches. The straw in the billets was left there till it was broken up into small pieces and was alive with vermin. When these MAP 1
MAP 5

conditions were brought to the notice of higher authorities, clean straw was nearly always forthcoming; but often the conditions were not represented as they should have been.

About this time news arrived of the doings of the 2nd Battalion at the 2nd Battle of Ypres. It is remarkable that during the combats in Sanctuary Wood the 61st had its hardest fighting and suffered its greatest losses on 9th May, on which day the 28th was so heavily engaged in the attack on the Aubers Ridge.

MAP 2 On 20th May the 28th marched off to Béthune after relief in Cambrin by the 5th Royal Sussex and was in its billets by 5.30 p.m. The men were in the Tobacco Factory, where there was ample accommodation in clean, good rooms; the officers were in excellent private houses in the same road as the factory. Everyone settled down comfortably, believing that the Regiment would be quartered in this pleasantly civilised town for an appreciable period; however, on the morning of 21st May orders were received to relieve the 23rd London Regiment in the line at Cuinchy that evening. Off went the Regiment again before anyone had time to enjoy the delights of Béthune and by 6 p.m. was in the sector at Cuinchy that had been held earlier in the month. It was occupied till 25th May without casualties, a very rare occurrence. The trenches were comfortable and except for one thunderstorm the weather was excellent. Headquarters was still in the cottage south-west of Cuinchy Church; it was too popular with the German artillery, but the may trees that surrounded it were now in full bloom and smelt very sweetly. Two companies held the front line with one in support round about the brick-stacks. The fourth was in Stafford Redoubt. From the brick-stacks a view could be obtained into the German second-line trench. A good deal of sniping was done from the top of them, and it was alleged that several hits were obtained; the enemy certainly shelled the brick-stacks a good deal.

MAP 1 The relief by the 1st South Wales Borderers on 25th May began at 10 a.m. and was completed by 12.30 p.m.; the whole Regiment was in billets in Saily la Bourse by 2.30 p.m. This was not a bad village, though the main street was hot and smelly. The men's billets were indifferent, but several changes of quarters made them more comfortable. Headquarters was in the local chateau; it was rumoured that its owner, a very aged man, was still there, though he was never seen. He kept pigs and had a large aviary; his garden was delightful. The village up to

now had been used solely by French troops as a billeting place; consequently the prices of the commodities required by the men were surprisingly low; they had not yet been quadrupled to suit the British purse. On 27th May the men got baths and a much-needed change of clothing. The latter was bad; much of it contained the eggs of the louse, which, it was averred, only required the heat of the human body to hatch out.

Major Gardiner returned from the base on 29th May and took over command of the battalion; Captain Pagan went back to "C" Company. On the same day the Regiment returned to the trenches and by midday had relieved the 9th Liverpool Regiment in Sector Y4, that immediately south of the Vermelles-Auchy road. Life in this bit of line was uneventful. Three companies were in front, with one in support near Battalion Headquarters, which was close to the line. The enemy's trenches were some way off; he shelled ours accurately and fairly frequently, and it was difficult to get retaliation. At night the rumble of transport on the *pavé* roads behind the enemy's line was incessant, and again attempts to persuade the guns to fire were unsuccessful, so long-range rifle fire had to be tried. The trenches were good, the dugouts were fair, and the weather, though cold at night, was fine. One afternoon an excellent soldier, No. 6547 Private C. Emerson, was killed while sniping; he fired too long from the same place, and the enemy, marking down his position, shot him when he exposed himself.

On June 2nd the 19th London Regiment took over the line from the Regiment; the 28th marched off to Béthune again, where the men went to the Montmorency Barracks, and the officers lodged in good houses round a large square close by. The relief began at 7 p.m.; everyone was in bed by 11 p.m. and was glad to get there. These fine quarters were usually occupied by back area troops, but the latter had been moved out of the town owing to the persistent shelling of Béthune, which the Germans had just begun; thus out of evil came good, for the infantry at least. As was usual when Béthune was visited, a long rest and possible leave to England were prophesied, but on 4th June the Regiment was off again to the forward areas, leaving Béthune in the afternoon and taking over billets at Annequin from the 1st Northamptonshire Regiment at 6 p.m. and in some of the houses of Cambrin on the main Béthune-

MAP 2

MAP 1

La Bassée road ; "C" Company was billeted round Cambrin Church. The surroundings here were delightful, particularly in the neighbourhood of the railway embankment south of the church. The fields were full of long grass and the seedlings from last year's crops; there were everywhere patches of scarlet poppies and vivid blue cornflowers. The days passed pleasantly and idly in perfect weather, though by night large working parties had to be provided to dig new trenches in the Quinchy sector of the line, where, one night, a man was killed and three were wounded during a German bombing attack. On Thursday, 10th June, the Regiment, relieved by the London Scottish, at 6 p.m., marched back to Béthune.

CHAPTER III

BETHUNE—CAUCHY—THE TRENCHES SOUTH OF THE BETHUNE- LA BASSEE ROAD

THIS visit to Béthune proved to be the long hoped for rest, which lasted a fortnight. The men were quartered in the Tobacco Factory, where they settled down comfortably. The whole battalion had baths on 12th June; the clothing issued was good, some of it being actually new. The only drawback was that on 20th June the men's blankets had to be handed in. No one expected blankets in the line and its neighbourhood, but they added enormously to the comfort of the troops at rest, and it is difficult to understand the need of the withdrawal—which took place every summer—during position warfare. Bethune was a large town with plenty of shops and estaminets; it was very good for the men to stay so long in a civilised place, a pleasure they had not enjoyed since the war began. The officers were quartered in comfortable houses. The whole of the 3rd Brigade was in the town. The weather was delightful, and only a reasonable amount of training was required of the troops, but owing to the possibility of being needed for the attacks that were still proceeding at Festubert and Givenchy all units had to be ready to move at short notice. Frequent concerts were held in the French theatre, and a brigade boxing meeting also took place there on Monday and Tuesday, 14th and 15th June. There were an enormous number of entries and great audiences; at the final show on the Tuesday evening over 1,500 men were present in the theatre. On 17th and 18th June brigade swimming sports were held in the lake in the public gardens; on the 19th brigade athletic sports took place in the same park. The Regiment did little good at boxing and athletics but practically farmed the swimming events. Although the town was regularly shelled, most of the inhabitants remained; the shops were open, and the market was in full swing. All sorts of supplies were obtainable, and really good fish, including excellent soles, could be bought daily. The bank did its business in its cellars, heavily sandbagged, but many of the inhabitants were still living above

ground. An exception was the local veterinary surgeon whose house was adorned with a magnificent gilt horse's head—it was at first mistaken for an inn and was called the "Nag's Head"—he lived underground, so the fortunate officer billeted there occupied the best bedroom upstairs.

While in Béthune leave was granted to those N.C.Os. and men who had been in France since the beginning of the war. This was a move in the right direction, though there were many who had done long and arduous service without fulfilling the necessary conditions. It was at this time also that definite reports—in addition to innumerable rumours—began to reach the fighting troops of strikes and refusals to go all out with their work on the part of some of those engaged in England at employment essential to the war. The regular officer and soldier were only doing in France that for which they had been paid for years; it was their profession. They had neither the right nor the wish to resent the behaviour of these ill-humoured workers. But such conduct must have appeared odd to those who now formed the bulk of the expeditionary force: the men who had hastened to join the army at the outbreak of war. There was also considerable grumbling in some of the English newspapers about the enforced cessation of games and sports. An example is the bitter complaint in a sporting paper as to official interference with a member of its staff when he was superintending the shipment of two perfectly able-bodied boxers to perform in Australia. To read of such efforts made the soldier think.

On 24th June the sojourn at Béthune ended, but instead of returning to the line as everyone expected the Regiment went
MAP 1 even farther back. It marched in the afternoon to the village of Cauchy à la Tour by way of Marles and Auchel and after halting for a long time in a field close to the church went into most comfortable billets in large farms and houses, all of which were inhabited by friendly people. The march was long, and the day was hot; the march discipline was rightly criticised by the Divisional Commander. The Regiment rarely erred in this respect.

Cauchy was a pleasant village and was to become well known to the 28th during the next eight months. Eggs, milk, green peas and strawberries were plentiful, cheap and good. The weather was wet. On the 26th the Regiment, less "C" Company, took part in a brigade route march; "C" Company was employed in making practice trenches near one of the mines in Auchel.

While at Cauchy the number of bombers in each company was increased to 32. Later in the war every man was a bomber in that he was trained to throw a bomb and to prepare it for throwing, but in 1915 and well on into 1916 the bomber was a specialist. It was this pernicious system of specialisation that caused the bomb to be a danger rather than an aid. Its immediate result was that whenever a situation demanded the use of bombs the experts were called for, instead of the projectiles being used by the men on the spot; thus the bomb became a weapon equal with the rifle instead of an adjunct to it.

On 28th June the 28th set off once more for the line. The march was strenuous; twenty miles were covered before the Regiment was in the trenches. It was rendered more arduous by the presence in each company of about half a dozen men who by reason of their age or some other infirmity were physically incapable of such a march. They could do their work in the line including even their digging, but they could not walk a yard, and to deliver them at their destination was a considerable undertaking. Later in the war it was possible to get rid of such men, but in mid-fifteen it could not be done for love or money.

The route taken was by Auchel, Marles, Labuissiere, Noeux-les-Mines and Sailly la Bourse. A halt was made near Houchin for a meal, and the Regiment bivouacked in the evening in the grounds of the Chateau des Pres, while the Commanding Officer and the Company Commanders went forward to reconnoitre the line; on their return the march continued. The new sector lay just south of the Vermelles-Hulluch road, a couple of miles east of the small town of Vermelles; the trenches were finally approached by a communication trench, the sinuous windings of which covered at least two miles before the front line was reached. Officers and men were really tired by the time they got to their allotted places and began the work that was necessary on arrival in the line. In the case of one company it was 4.30 a.m. before everything had been done. Throughout this war of the trenches it was extraordinary how quickly everyone recovered from intense fatigue; there is no doubt that the healthy open-air life, the hard work and the good food suited the average man and that in consequence he thrived.

The line was held with two companies in front, one in support and one in reserve. The latter was at Battalion Headquarters,

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... the Regiment ...
... and Beau- ...
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... La Bassee road.
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... with similar stacks.
... been demolished.
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... congestion. The
... two companies
... and good. The
... the main road.
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... have been an
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... the road. The
... actually
... the trench.

MAP I

The road was getting lower and less comfortable when its
... was disturbed and it had to be left by orders to
... the French beyond it that day. At 5 a.m. on 14th
... marched 1 mile to a house, where the
... bullets went in. Commanding Officer and
... after attending a conference at the
... General. Faking and the Commander
... to be relieved, went off to explore the new
... the battalion, and despite the facts
... the line spoke a word of
... English and that our intelligence was not available, the relief was
... after a strenuous day. It was
... the very close liaison that existed between
... Even allowing that
... their map
... how rapidly their guns got going

when the infantry was annoyed by the enemy. The amount of ammunition available for retaliation made one envious, for our artillery could spare very few rounds a day for the purpose. However, the much maligned *Daily Mail* had already begun its agitation for an adequate supply, and this helped more than anything else to correct a state of affairs that would soon have lost the war.

The new sector, that next but one south of the Béthune-La Bassée road, was of considerable depth. Its magnificent dugouts were far superior to any that the Regiment had yet occupied, and the excellent trenches were well drained and well revetted. On the front of the right company was the mine that had been blown when the 28th was in the Guinchy trenches. The French had made no effort to occupy the lip of the crater nearest to our line; therefore, while the sector was held, "C" Company dug out to the crater and established a post on it, a most necessary precaution. Shell fire and rifle fire were not severe; the enemy's trenches were close to ours. Battalion Headquarters was a charming little underground, two-roomed cottage with a roof of curved iron. In front, opening on to the trench, was a partially roofed veranda, with seats on three sides of it, from which steps led down into the house; the whole was painted pale blue. The walls and roof of the living room were papered, and everywhere were polished shell cases full of lilac. The French certainly made themselves comfortable in the line. This residence was called "Villa Beau Terrier"; its only drawback was its distance, about 1,000 yards by communication trench, from the front line.

This tour ended on 18th May, and after relief by the 2nd Welch the Regiment moved into brigade reserve in and about the village of Cambri
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MAP 5

shown new trenches at Cuinchy, passed in sorting and reorganising the sections and platoons. Next day the Regiment set out for the new trenches, marching via Béthune and Beuvry and halting for the midday meal on the high ground between these places, whence could be seen to the south the bursting shells of the French attacks at Souchez and Givenchy en Gohelle.

MAP 3 The new bit of line, the southern portion of the Cuinchy Section, lay immediately north of the Béthune-La Bassée road. The trenches ran among numerous large stacks of bricks, and the German forward position was dotted with similar stacks; the factory that produced them had long been demolished. A long communication trench, paved with bricks, led from Harley Street to the line, and there was a separate trench for exit, an arrangement that prevented much congestion. The front-line trenches, which were occupied by two companies with another in support, were commodious and good. The remaining company was in Stafford Redoubt on the main road. Battalion Headquarters was in a pleasant cottage, with excellent dugouts adjoining it, in a lane leading from Harley Street to the road beside which stood the church. Cuinchy must have been an attractive village; the church was embowered with trees, which were almost undamaged. The line was peaceful except for the explosion of mines on the French front, south of the road. The debris of one mine, exploded 200 or 300 yards away, actually caused casualties in our trenches.

MAP 1 The 28th was settling down here very comfortably when its peace was disturbed late at night on 13th May by orders to relieve the French beyond the road next day. At 5 a.m. on 14th May the Regiment marched to Sailly la Bourse, where the men were dumped in billets while the Commanding Officer and Company Commanders, after attending a conference at the Chateau des Pres between General Haking and the Commander of the French division to be relieved, went off to explore the new trenches. They then fetched the battalion, and despite the facts that none of the Frenchmen holding the line spoke a word of English and that our interpreter was not available, the relief was triumphantly effected by 7 p.m. after a strenuous day. It was interesting to observe the very close liaison that existed between the French field artillery and their infantry. Even allowing that the Frenchmen at this time were quicker than us with their map references, it was remarkable how rapidly their guns got going

when the infantry was annoyed by the enemy. The amount of ammunition available for retaliation made one envious, for our artillery could spare very few rounds a day for the purpose. However, the much maligned *Daily Mail* had already begun its agitation for an adequate supply, and this helped more than anything else to correct a state of affairs that would soon have lost the war.

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This tour ended on 18th May, and after relief by the 2nd Welch the Regiment moved into brigade reserve in and about the village of Cambrin, leaving "A" Company in shelters dug in a bank close to the Maison Rouge. The weather was now fine and warm. The men were badly in need of a change of clothes; baths and fresh clothes at this period of the war were few and far between, and many of the men had thrown away their shirts owing to their lousy condition. Friends of the Regiment had been very good in sending out shirts, but the supply from private sources could never equal the demand. We had not yet realised how necessary was the care of billets, continually used by successions of regiments, during the long drawn out war of the trenches. The straw in the billets was left there till it was broken up into small pieces and was alive with vermin. When these MAP 1
MAP 5

Le Rutoire Farm, which was really a small hamlet lying about half-way between Vermelles and the front line. The trenches were good, and the Germans were far away. There was no rifle fire and little shell fire, though one day "D" Company lost six men from the latter cause. The tour was uncomfortable because the weather was wet, and the trenches, dug in chalk soil, held water. Two companies worked every night from dark to dawn on a new front line, 200 yards forward; the unpleasant task continued even after relief by the South Wales Borderers on 2nd July. When the latter had taken over, the Regiment went

MAP 1 to the billets that it had occupied in La Bourse at the end of May; the companies that had been left behind to dig were not in till 6 a.m. on the 3rd. On the evenings of 3rd and 4th July the whole battalion moved up at dark to Vermelles to work all night at a new reserve line, just east of the town. This was a pretty strenuous job, and each morning day had long broken before the troops were again in their billets. On 5th July the 28th moved to Labeuvriere, where route marching and other training were carried out; on 9th July the 3rd Brigade was inspected by Lord Kitchener at Fouquieres. On the 13th, though still in reserve, the Regiment moved forward to relieve the 1st Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. Headquarters, "B" and "D" Companies went to Annequin, "A" Company to MAP 5 Cambrin, and "C" to the shelters in the bank north-west of Maison Rouge. The latter company had a platoon in Railway Keep.

Little of note occurred here. "C" Company's dugouts were cavernous places; the remainder of the Regiment was in houses. The weather was wet, but the work to be done—digging new second-line trenches—was not arduous. On the morning of the 14th the enemy shelled Cambrin vigorously with 5.9's, setting fire to a shed at the south end of the school where a quantity of loose ammunition was stored. The result was a terrific and continuous fusilade, which for a while puzzled everybody, it being obvious that the Germans could not have got into the village with so little preliminary commotion.

On 19th July the sector of the line immediately south of the MAP 5 Béthune-La Bassée road was taken over from the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers. It was known as Bomb Alley and was a repulsive place, particularly on the extreme left where the opposing trenches were very close together. Day and night the

enemy hurled at us a great variety of mortar shells and rifle grenades; it almost seemed that he used this part of his line as a testing place for new types of trench weapons. The Regiment had heard, before it went into the sector, of its reputation, and the reports were not exaggerated. The Germans were far ahead of us in this kind of warfare, and their ammunition seemed inexhaustible, whereas our supply of rather indifferent rifle grenades soon ran out, and we were reduced to the expedient of continually moving the men according to what part of the trench was being bombarded.

During the tour of six days this method proved somewhat tiring to the officers* on trench duty, but was so far successful that only five casualties occurred, whereas the regiments holding the sector immediately previously had suffered very heavily. Hair-raising adventures were continuous; the experiences of one officer on trench duty, early in the morning on 25th July, will suffice as an example of what happened to most of the inhabitants of Bomb Alley. Just after midnight he was standing near a sentry, one newly joined and unaccustomed to the turmoil of the line. A rifle grenade appeared to be descending directly on to the sentry, who was so interested that he made no move. There was just time for him to be bundled into the mouth of a handy dugout before the thing burst on the back wall of the trench. Just before 2 a.m. the exemplar officer was instructing a corporal regarding the removal of the debris caused by the explosion of a large trench mortar bomb. While they were about this another bomb appeared above them, twirling slowly down. They could not run forward owing to the obstruction in the trench; there was no time to turn and run backward. Therefore they lay flat where they were and awaited results. The bomb burst on the parapet about a foot above their heads, burying them completely with earth and sandbags. From this mess they were extricated, nervous but unharmed, by the onlookers.

No. 659 Corporal Wyatt was the only man killed while the 28th was here. He was in command of a listening post in one of our mines, under which the enemy blew a camouflet; though the men of the post got clear, Corporal Wyatt did not.

* When a battalion was in the line, one officer in each company was always out in the trench on duty. If the number of officers in a company was small—at times there were only two—this duty was strenuous.

In an effort to abate the bombing nuisance our forward trenches were, on 21st July, cleared of men while the 30th Howitzer Battery registered on those of the enemy. The attempt was useless because the German trenches were too close to ours for the guns to shoot with safety.

No one was displeased when the Regiment, relieved by the 1st Scots Guards, marched out to Verquin, arriving about 1 a.m. on 26th July and going into fairly comfortable billets. Verquin was a mining village, but the streets were wide and clean, with rural surroundings; the people were particularly friendly and kind. From the western end of the village it was possible, by using field-glasses, to see the German lines, six miles away.

On 28th July Major Gardiner went on leave and Captain Pagan took over. While in England Major Gardiner became ill, and Captain Pagan retained the command, except for a couple of months in 1916 when he was in England owing to wounds, until 24th March, 1918. Compared with the average regiment the 28th had few such changes. It is of interest to note them.

4th August, 1914 to 24th February, 1915:

Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Lovett.

25th February, 1915 to 27th July, 1915:

Major G. F. Gardiner.

28th July, 1915 to 23rd March, 1918:

Lieutenant-Colonel A. W. Pagan.

(During his absence, Lieutenant-Colonel D. Baxter commanded from 9th September, 1916 to 21st October, 1916, and Lieutenant-Colonel H. N. Vinen from 22nd October, 1916 to 11th November, 1916.)

24th March, 1918 to 24th October, 1918:

Lieutenant-Colonel J. L. F. Tweedie.

25th October, 1918 to 11th November, 1918:

Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. Guild.

In October 1915 Lieutenant-Colonel Lovett, having finished his four years in command, was gazetted out of the Regiment, and Major Gardiner, the senior major, was gazetted in his place. It is remarkable that the latter officer, being only fit for home service during the rest of the war, never served with the 28th during the period that he was shown in the Army List as commanding it.

Lieutenant R. W. Newman was now acting as Adjutant—he had taken over the work when Captain Bosanquet was wounded on 9th May—and the companies were commanded as follows: “A,” Captain R. D. Scott; “B,” Captain A. St. J. Blunt; “C,” Lieutenant N. Durant; “D,” Captain H. N. Vinen.

A move forward was made on 31st July, and the 2nd Royal Sussex Regiment was relieved in Vermelles. The billets were reached at about 10 p.m., and everyone was settled in by midnight. Fierce fighting between the French and the Germans had taken place at Vermelles in 1914; the town, now without inhabitants, was almost levelled to the ground. But there was ample accommodation in the excellent cellars of the houses, and an unlimited supply of clean straw was obtainable from the numerous ricks round about. The greater part of the Regiment was billeted in the houses west of the church; Headquarters was in the road running south-east from the church. Here the cellars of about four houses had been joined up; the rooms above them still existed, and all the furniture and other belongings of their inhabitants remained. The place was an excellent one in which to be quartered, though it was considerably shelled, the church being the favourite target of the hostile guns. MAP 5

Large fatigue parties went digging each night; their principal work was to make a trench from Daly's Keep to the front line, in the Le Rutoire Sector.

This same sector was taken over from the 1st South Wales Borderers on 4th August. Shelling was infrequent, and the lines were too far apart for rifle fire, so life was placid and pleasant. The line was occupied till 12th August—a longer spell than usual—but no one minded as the weather was dry, except for one thunderstorm, and very warm. Notwithstanding a lack of shelters, the trenches were really excellent. Although we had not yet begun the installation of elaborate deep dugouts, the science of trench maintenance had advanced enormously. Every trench in the sector was well drained and well revetted; the traverses were wide and solid, and the floors were boarded and even. These advantages, aided by the dry weather and the absence of shelling, made it possible to keep the trenches scrupulously clean; they were swept with home-made bass brooms every morning and evening. After dusk the transport and rations were brought right up to Le Rutoire, and as there were three different ways from there to the front line, the work of getting

the rations forward was much easier than usual. In fact the standard of living was higher than had ever been reached before. It is remarkable that the 1st Brigade, to which belonged the 1st Scots Guards which relieved the Regiment at the end of the tour, reported to the Division that the condition of the trenches they had taken over was exceptional. A compliment of this kind from one battalion to another was almost unique during the war, though the reverse sometimes occurred.

Le Rutoire Farm, where Headquarters and the reserve company were, was a fine place; the dugouts and cellars were excellent, but any considerable movement outside the farm by day produced hostile shell fire at once. A lot of good patrolling was done. The available maps showed trenches running out from the German line to the remains of two small copses named respectively La Haie and Bois Carrée. Our patrols discovered that no trenches existed but that the Germans were working at the copses and putting out wire. In a pencil-drawn plan of the enemy's line opposite Le Rutoire, found in a German dugout on the second day of the battle of Loos, these short lengths of trench were labelled "Alter Deutsche Graben." South of the copses lay "Lone Tree," well known to all dwellers in the neighbourhood. Work was also suspected here, and it was explored by patrols. The leading spirits in this patrolling, which took place nightly, were Second-Lieutenant J. E. S. Wakely, the scout officer, Sergeant Gray, the scout sergeant, and Lieutenant R. A. Angier. Enemy patrols were also active; they were more than once chased, but without results.

MAP 2 On leaving these agreeable trenches the Regiment went, for the last time, to Béthune and got into good billets in the Orphanage and the Faubourg d'Arras at 2.30 a.m. on 13th August, after a wearisome march. An unpleasant accident during bombing practice marred the stay here; owing to a defective fuse the missile that No. 17798 Private Goodhall was about to throw went off in his hand, killing him instantly; Second-Lieutenant Philpott was dangerously wounded, and another man lost an eye. Our indifferent bombs were always liable to explode prematurely, and the numerous accidents that resulted were not encouraging to the bomber. However, the Mills bomb was soon to be issued; it certainly saved the situation. On 16th August Captain Bosanquet returned, full of war and more or less recovered of his wounds; he resumed the duties of Adjutant.

Just about now the Guards Division was formed, and consequently the 1st Coldstream Guards and the 1st Scots Guards left the 1st Brigade. They were replaced by the 10th Gloucestershire and the 8th Royal Berkshire. On 16th August the Regiment vacated the Orphanage for the Berkshire, which on 17th August was replaced by the 10th Gloucestershire.

The Regiment was not overworked at Béthune, which was still a jolly place to live in. The atmosphere of mystery that always seemed to permeate life in the Faubourg d'Arras was intensified by the feeling that big things were imminent. The officer and soldier of the line had, of course, not yet been told that the time for the attack at Loos was at hand, but various events had warned them that some such thing was about to take place. The average man always felt a gentle melancholy at the approach of big battles; not because he feared their result as regards himself, but because he knew that in them he must lose many with whom he had served in great good fellowship. But he was glad that he was in the war even as his forefathers had been glad for centuries before him, and, unless human nature changes or mankind loses its virility, as his descendants will be for centuries after him. Moreover the ordinary decent man did not start the war in a state of youthful heroism and then gradually deteriorate until he finished in a condition of abject cowardice; it is unfortunate that current war literature, which—with a few notable exceptions—depicts either the abnormal, the self-obsessed or else the utterly disgruntled, should give the impression that he did. The soldier of the years 1914 to 1918 had just as much staying power as had his predecessors of any generation.*

On 18th August the Regiment went forward to take over MAP 5 from the 2nd Royal Sussex the sector of the line that was bounded on the north by the Vermelles-La Bassée road and on the south by the Vermelles-Auchy road. It was infested by mosquitoes. The front line was held with "C" Company on the right, a company of the 8th Royal Berkshire, in for instruction, in the centre and "A" on the left. In support, "D" was on the right, "B" on the left. On the 19th the Berkshire company was relieved by one from the 10th Gloucestershire. Battalion Headquarters was commodious, close to the line and much

* The best war novel yet published is *The Natural Man*. Other excellent ones are *Her Privates We* and *The Storm of Steel*.

shelled by the enemy's guns. On the 21st the sector was divided into two, one on each side of the Bully Grenay-La Bassée railway; the Regiment kept the part—now termed Z1 Sector—that lay north of the railway. It was held with two companies together with that of the 10th Battalion; the other companies withdrew to Annequin Fosse. Finally, on the 22nd, the line was handed over to the 4th Royal Welch Fusiliers; Headquarters and "C" Company joined those at Annequin Fosse, leaving "B" in support in the line. The reason for all this chopping and changing was that the Regiment had been detailed to dig jumping off trenches, 200 yards in front of the existing line, for the Battle of Loos; the particular bit to be done by the 28th was that in Z1 Sector. A long conference with the Brigadier and various sappers and other experts had been held at Battalion Headquarters on 20th August; the work was to begin on the 23rd.

The billets in the miners' model houses at Annequin Fosse were extremely comfortable. Some of them were still occupied by their owners, though the place was shelled daily, but there were plenty of good rooms and any amount of clean straw. The officers were well off; those who did not mind sleeping upstairs got beds, and if their landladies were kindhearted, sheets as well. The weather was delightful; the Sunday evening of the move back to Annequin was of unforgettable loveliness, with the clouds and the high shell bursts of which the German gunners were so fond glowing pink with the reflection of the light.

The work on the advancement of the line began on the appointed date and continued, all night and every night, until 31st August. The whole battalion sallied forth, half at dusk and half to relieve them four hours later; it was 5 a.m. next morning before the last of them was home again. For some reason various hostile strong-points, such as a machine gun on the railway embankment, were shelled for twenty-four hours before the first night's work began. This made the Germans think that something was up—they may even have suspected an attack—consequently several hostile machine guns were ranging during the afternoon, and soon after the shelling ceased the enemy opened very heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, sweeping with bullets the ground between our trenches and his own. Luckily the working parties had not emerged; but the covering party was being put out, and its members had to lie flat, like squashed

frogs, while the hail of lead descended. The remnants of a crashed aeroplane lay between the lines; the incessant noise of bullets striking its metallic parts added to the uncomfortable feelings of those cowering near it, wondering when and whereabouts they would be hit. The storm died away by degrees, only three of the covering party having been wounded. The work was commenced by sapping, but by midnight it was possible to work above ground, and good progress had been made by daylight. For six days the weather was perfect, a magnificent moon in a cloudless sky making the night as bright as day, while the days were gloriously fine; on the 29th it became wet and cold. The Germans, after the first night, were not active, though they must have known what was going on; except for occasional bursts of fire and one or two feeble sallies, when they threw bombs, they did not interfere. A few casualties occurred each night, but no one was killed. On the 27th the Fosse was shelled with 5.9's from 11.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and two men were slightly wounded; most people were too sleepy to be disturbed.

On 1st September, having completed the job satisfactorily, the Regiment moved back to the "White City"—a collection of draughty canvas huts—at Fouquereuil, where one chill, wet night was spent, and where most people caught colds. Here was met Captain E. d'A. le Mottée, who had been adjutant of the 61st before and during the South African war. He was now a General Staff Officer with the 9th Division; he was destined to be killed in the Loos battle together with his divisional commander. In him the Regiment lost an invaluable officer, who, had he lived, would have risen to great heights in his profession. Next day the 28th marched still farther westward with the rest of the 3rd Brigade, fetching up in the evening at Cauchy where the companies settled down comfortably in their old billets with Headquarters in the mayor's farm; he was away at the war so his wife was in charge.

This move to back areas was expected to be the beginning of a divisional rest. On the face of it, with the Loos battle imminent, such a rest appeared improbable. The authorities, however, certainly did not discourage the belief; they even went so far as to issue "Instructions for Training" in which the importance of "practising digging" was once more accentuated. On these instructions battalion training programmes were ordered to be

modelled. The popular idea was that the 1st Division, having taken part in all the fighting that there had been since the war began, was to leave this battle to the new army. Blankets were issued, as was the first rum ration since May; despite the threat of winter contained in these precautions everyone was quite happy. The weather continued to be wet until Sunday, 5th September, a delightful day of sunshine, fleeting clouds and fresh breeze. There was a church parade in the morning in which the divisional band, recently formed and consisting principally of men of the Regiment, took part. On such an afternoon it was pleasant to walk over really delightful country, and passing through Floringhem and Pernes—each packed with French soldiers of all sorts, including coal-black Chasseurs d'Afrique whose salutes were accompanied by beaming smiles—to climb through harvested fields on to real hilly ground, a change indeed from the eternal flatness of the La Bassée plain. The high ground was wooded; ripe blackberries were abundant; the solitude, away from war and away from man, was a joy.

It was a blow to return from such a walk to find that while it was in progress orders had been received to send four officers at once to reconnoitre new trenches and that the Regiment was to start back for the line on the morrow. The men had not yet had baths, so hasty arrangements were made for this function to take place before parade on the following morning.

The return march, on another lovely day, was again done in brigade, by way of Marles, the Bois des Dames, Hesdigneul and Vaudricourt. The whole brigade halted near Hesdigneul for a midday meal; it was uncommon as well as agreeable for all to meet in the open and at their ease; generally they only saw one another underground, for a hasty moment during trench reliefs. At La Bourse the Quartermaster met the Regiment and provided an evening meal; the march was then resumed as far as some new reserve trenches just north-west of Mazingarbe, in and around which the Regiment bivouacked for the night. Next day the journey continued at 10 a.m., and the Le Rutoire Sector was

MAP 5

taken over from the 2nd/60th Rifles and part of the 1st Northamptonshire. Except for a little shelling the trenches were as peaceful as ever; the days continued to be gorgeous, though the nights were cold.

On 7th September General Haking was appointed to command the 11th Corps; he was succeeded by Major-General A. E. A.

Holland who, on the same evening, made his first appearance as far as the Regiment was concerned by climbing from No Man's Land into our front line trench: a good start. General Haking was a great loss; in addition to being a first-rate commander he was a kind and considerate man. About this time the 28th lost Captain Blunt, who left to be a brigade major in the 20th Division. He was at home on leave from India when the war began and came to France with the 28th; he had served with it uninterruptedly till now. Reticent, unmoved whatever was toward, he stalked through the war unaffected even by the utter fatigues and stresses of the first Ypres battle, which wore out all the others; he became and remained a legendary figure in the eyes of the 28th. He ended the war in command of a battalion of his own regiment, the York and Lancaster; his adopted regiment has never forgotten him.

As usual a lot of digging was done each night in front of our front line, and dead Germans, killed during the fighting that occurred here in 1914, were continually disinterred. On 12th September the Brigadier took the Commanding Officer to inspect derelict French trenches lying south of the farm; when the present tour in the line was over, it was to be the task of the Regiment to prepare these as assembly trenches for the battle of Loos. On the 13th the line was handed over to the 1st South Wales Borderers, the 28th going out to Philosophie. The collection of houses, really a part of Vermelles, which lay around the crossing of the Grenay-La Bassée railway and the Béthune-Lens road, and where the miners who worked at the neighbouring Fosse lived, was called by this name; it was a comfortable spot. All the inhabitants were still there when the Regiment arrived, but to their intense annoyance, as well as to that of those officers who had beds to sleep in, they and all their goods were removed by the French authorities on 19th September, preparatory to the coming battle. The 28th now embarked on a most strenuous week's work. To begin with, on the nights of 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th September the whole Regiment, in relays, worked from dark to dawn at the old French trenches; it was more than once as late as 7 a.m. before those at Headquarters got to bed, for each night's work had to be checked and reported to the brigade as soon as it was finished. The dead bodies unearthed here were Frenchmen instead of Germans, but they smelt just the same. The quantity of unaimed bullets that flew about the

MAP 1

MAP 5

place caused a number of casualties. Memory fails to recall whether this work was finished on the 17th or whether it was handed over to someone else to complete; at any rate, on the nights of the 18th, 19th and 20th the Regiment, with one company of the Munsters attached, was switched on to new work.

This was to carry the gas cylinders for use in the coming attack from dumps near Vermelles to the front line and to put them in their emplacements. The work was extremely hard because the gas cylinders were heavy and unwieldy, and the communication trenches along which they had to be borne were long and twisty.

Luckily the weather was still delightful so that everyone was able to rest in comfort during the day; it was nice to sit and write one's letters in pleasant fields where the cows browsed among the cannon. Now, also, the routes allotted to the different units on their way up to the battle had to be explored; those of the many newly made tracks that were to be used by the Regiment were reconnoitred on the afternoon of Monday, 20th September. Cylinder carrying finished at 2 a.m. on 21st September; the 28th then moved from Philosophe to bivouac in the reserve trenches north-west of Mazingarbe that had been occupied once before. Everyone was settled in by 4.30 a.m.; but unused trenches such as these had a cold and unhomely air compared with the proper line. Although blankets were available, such things as braziers and other trench comforts were much missed. It was interesting to walk from this bivouac to watch the 15-inch howitzer that was bombarding Loos from a position just north of La Bourse. This howitzer was manned by Marines; it was fired electrically from a distance, and it was thrilling to watch the shell, weighing over 1,400 pounds, sailing up into the air from the muzzle of the terrifying weapon.

By now the details of the battle were known. During the time at Philosophe, commanding officers had been taken up into various high places by officers of the divisional staff and had been shown, on the ground as well as on the map, the objectives to which it was hoped that they would attain. The final brigade conference on the operations was held at Mazingarbe on the morning of 22nd September; in the evening the Regiment marched to Vaudricourt, by the tracks allotted for the return journey a few days later. Vaudricourt Wood, in which the 28th bivouacked on arrival, was pretty thickly populated. The headquarters of a new army division occupied the chateau; that

of the 4th Corps was in a hutted camp built in the wood. In addition, from the way that one was trampled on at night, other bodies of troops appeared to arrive continually.

The brigade chaplain, the Reverend W. H. Blackburne, a remarkable man who did great work during the war and eventually became senior chaplain of the First Army, organised a regimental concert for the evening of the 23rd. He, the Staff Captain of the Brigade and the Commanding Officer visited the chateau to borrow a piano, as had often been done when the 1st Division was in residence.

After they had waited for a long time in the hall, the chief A and Q staff officer of this fresh division came out to them, but his reception of the request was not encouraging. In fact he refused point blank to produce the piano, and animadverted, on behalf of his commander, on the desirability of regimental concerts under the existing conditions. But the Brigade Chaplain could not be diverted easily from his intention; he got a piano elsewhere and had it transported to the wood. An invitation was sent to, and accepted by, Sir Henry Rawlinson, in his hutment among the trees, and the site for the concert was prepared as close as might be to the chateau. It was fondly hoped that as soon as the noise of the entertainment penetrated to the ears of those within the chateau an infuriated staff officer would rush forth to suppress it; he would then be confronted by the Corps Commander, justly irate at the interruption. However, this sweet revenge was not to be, because a deluge, which began in the afternoon and continued all night, completely washed out any attempt at a concert.

The rain stopped about 10 a.m. next morning only to begin again in the afternoon and to continue more heavily all the evening. Luckily the days and nights were warm, but living as they were, under trees and without other cover, everyone got very wet. The rain also made the work of handing in blankets and packs and of issuing the extra stores, rations, ammunition and equipment necessary for use during the battle more difficult than it would otherwise have been.

Early in the morning of 25th September the Regiment paraded to march forward to the battle, in preparation for which it had worked so hard, and from which so much was expected.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF LOOS

MAP 5A THE primary object of the combined British and French attack at Loos, which began on 25th September, 1915, and of the French attack carried out simultaneously in the Champagne, was to help the Russians, who all along their front were being badly beaten by the Germans.

The means by which it was intended that this object should be attained was the advance northward on Namur of the Champagne attack and eastward on the same place of the Loos attack; successfully carried out this would result in the isolation and destruction of the three German armies holding the great salient in the enemy's line in France. The attack in Champagne was to be delivered on both sides of Rheims by thirty-four French infantry divisions with eight divisions of cavalry. The Loos attack was to be carried out on a frontage of twelve miles between Arras and Angres by the 10th French Army (seventeen divisions) with two cavalry divisions in reserve and on a frontage **MAP 1** of six miles between Grenay and the Aire-La Bassée canal by two corps of the British First Army (six divisions) and two cavalry brigades, having in reserve the 11th Corps (three infantry divisions) and two cavalry divisions. This latter reserve was in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief and not in those of the Army Commander.

On the British front the 4th Corps (47th, 15th and 1st Divisions from right to left) was to attack from the Double Crassier to the Vermelles-Hulluch Road and the 1st Corps (7th, 9th and 2nd Divisions from right to left) from the Vermelles-Hulluch road to the La Bassée Canal. Neither corps had a division in reserve; the only reserves beyond that in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief were the local ones of the divisions and the two cavalry brigades. In the case of the division on the extreme left there were no reserves at all, because one brigade was employed on a detached operation north of the canal, while the other two, both in the front line, were attacking south of it. In nearly every regular division the brigades still had one or even two extra battalions. It has never been explained why this surplus had so

long existed or what its object was; it made the brigades unwieldy and encouraged the formation of little special forces and consequent unsound operations. There were fifteen of these extra battalions in the 1st, 3rd and 4th Corps, more than enough to have provided the infantry of a new division.

Troops of the 3rd Corps and the Second Army were to carry out subsidiary operations northward in order to attract German attention and reserves.

The farthest objectives given to the First Army were: first the crossings of the Haute Deule Canal between Harnes and Bauvin, afterwards the line Henin Lietard-Carvin. The cavalry was to push on when the former line had been occupied to seize the crossings of the Scheldt between Condé and Tournai. MAP 5A

The above is sufficient to give a general idea of the battle. The British Commander-in-Chief did not consider that his armies were ready to carry out so big an operation—he suggested that they would be ready by the spring of 1916—but the circumstances compelled him at last to agree to take part. He also favoured an attack north, instead of south, of the La Bassée Canal, but here he also gave way; it is difficult to understand, when one considers how completely our attacks in that area had failed in May and June, why he should have wished to attack north of the canal.

The role of the 1st Division, on the extreme left of the 4th Corps, was to attack from immediately south of the Vermelles-Hulluch road to a sap, called Northern Sap, running out from the German line, about 1,700 yards south of the road. The first objective of the Division was the line Puits 14 Bis-Bois Hugo—southern part of Hulluch; the second objective was the part of the German second line trench that stretched from a small copse called Bois de Quatorze to Puits 13 Bis. The 2nd Brigade was to attack on the right, the 1st Brigade on the left, with the 3rd Brigade in reserve. Each of the assaulting brigades was allotted a frontage of about 600 yards; consequently there was a considerable gap between them when they started. The first objective of the 2nd Brigade was Puits 14 Bis and the Bois Hugo, and that of the 1st Brigade was the southern part of Hulluch; therefore they would continue to diverge as they advanced. For this reason a force, commanded by Colonel Green of the 2nd Royal Sussex and consisting of two of the extra battalions in the Division, was to move forward after the capture of the German first trench MAP 5 MAP 1

system to protect the exposed inner flanks of the attacking brigades. When the 1st and 2nd Brigades had reached their first objectives, Green's force was to occupy the space that would then exist between them.

Since the attack on the Aubers Ridge on 9th May the losses of the 28th had been slight—3 officers wounded, 9 men killed, 33 men wounded—and the reinforcements had amounted to 16 officers and 335 men. For the Loos battle, therefore, the Regiment was nearly up to strength. In the battle the companies were commanded as follows: "A," Captain R. D. Scott; "B," Lieutenant R. A. Angier; "C," Captain N. Durant; "D," Captain H. N. Vinen.

When the 28th left Vaudricourt Wood, shortly after 1 a.m. on 25th September, it was pretty well laden. Except the bombers, each man carried—in addition to arms and equipment—his rations for the 25th and his iron ration, a filled water-bottle, two sandbags, two smoke helmets, a waterproof sheet and 220 rounds of ammunition. The bomber's load was the same except that he was relieved of 100 rounds of ammunition and carried instead 5 cricket ball bombs. The cricket ball bomb was a well named but unwieldy missile, objectionable both to throw and to carry. Mills bombs were already in use in France, but none had yet reached the 1st Division. The iron ration was the reserve supply of food carried in case of emergency and consisted of bully beef and ration biscuit; no longer in existence was the delightful confection of chocolate and pemmican that had been used—and most thoroughly enjoyed by the troops—in the South African War. The smoke helmet, the current protection against gas, was a cowl made of the same stuff as the army shirt, provided with an oblong talc window. It was pulled over the head, its skirts were tucked inside the neck of the jacket, and the jacket was buttoned over the skirts; it was a horrid thing.

MAPS 1, 5 The Regiment marched by the appointed tracks and paths, and having halted in the street at Philosophe to drink tea laced with rum, reached the assembly position of the divisional reserve, in the old French trenches lying south of Le Rutoire, at 4 a.m.

The attack was launched at 6.30 a.m., preceded by a discharge of gas along the whole British front south of the Canal. From its position in reserve the 28th had an excellent view of the advance of the divisions to the south, and those who watched

were thrilled by the rapidity, good style and apparent ease with which our troops went forward. The wise ones, however, did not get this encouragement, because, knowing what was probably before them, they slept while they might.

The attack by the 1st Division was not nearly so successful as were those of the 47th and 15th to the south. On the right, the 2nd Brigade was completely held up and never succeeded in penetrating the enemy's front line. This failure was mainly due to the gas being blown back into our trenches, but also to the extraordinarily gallant defence put up by the Germans, a feat that had considerable effect on the battle. The 1st Brigade on the left was more successful, though losing heavily, and captured the enemy's front and support lines. Small bodies of men reached the Lens-La Bassée Road, but the Brigade did not get farther than this; it never reached the first objective. Meantime Green's force had been ordered to attack where the 2nd Brigade had failed and the 28th, followed by the remainder of the 3rd Brigade, to move forward into our front line trenches. Green's force made a gallant attempt, but was unable to succeed; the artillery fire had long since moved forward, and without it these frontal attacks were obviously futile. Consequently not until 11.45 a.m. was there room for the reserve even in the third and fourth line trenches, and here it waited till after 2 p.m., watching the vain efforts of the attackers. At 2.15 p.m. a divisional order placing the Regiment at the disposal of the 2nd Brigade and simultaneously an order from the 2nd Brigade to move southward to attack the enemy's left flank were received. The left battalion of the 15th Division was also held up, but south of this our troops had long before gone straight through to their objectives.

The Regiment moved off at once with a view to gaining a position on the Loos-Haisnes Road about North Loos Avenue, thus outflanking the defenders. Just as it was beginning to deploy, however, the latter, about 400 in number, surrendered. They were not only threatened on the south by the 28th but also on the north by a company detached for the purpose by the 2nd Welch, which was moving up to support the 1st Brigade. It was now 3.45 p.m., so the brave defence of the comparatively small body of the enemy opposed to the 2nd Brigade had been of the utmost value to the Germans.

The commander of the 2nd Brigade at once gave the Com-

manding Officer verbal orders to occupy the Bois Hugo, the first objective of his brigade, which lay about 2 miles from our front line. The 28th set off in three lines, advancing in a south-easterly direction. For some time there was no sign of war, a lull having set in over all the neighbouring battlefield; it was rather exciting to advance over the coarse autumn grass of fields that had been neither cultivated nor grazed since the war began and that had for so long been German territory. After the Loos-Hulluch road had been crossed considerable rifle fire, which appeared to come from the south, was encountered. Therefore the advance was stopped while a reconnaissance was made from the corner of a small wood, two or three hundred yards ahead. From here it was determined that the fire came from buildings on Hill 70; it was also evident that on the eastern side of the Lens-Hulluch road the Bois Hugo could be reached, unobserved by the defenders of the hill. The Regiment was moved

MAP 1 across the road, and the advance continued without further interruption, the wood being occupied with the loss of only three men.

Here, but for the steady shelling of the western end of the wood and of Puits 14 Bis, just outside its edge, by one very large gun situated somewhere near Wingles, all was peace, and the consolidation of the position was begun without delay. About 50 yards in front of the wood there ran a single line of railway. "B" and "D" Companies were set to dig in, facing south, along this line, which gave a certain amount of cover. Half of "C" Company was moved into the wood to make a trench at

MAP 5 right angles to that of "B" and "D," facing east and running into the wood, in order to protect the left flank, where none of our side were visible; actually the nearest British troops on that flank were those in front of Hulluch. Behind the wood, on the north side of it, "A" and the other half of "C" entrenched themselves in order to give depth to the position, to give additional protection to the left and to guard the right; the only British troops discernible on the right were a few Highlanders of the 15th Division on the lower slopes of Hill 70. Battalion Headquarters was first established at Puits 14 Bis, but the Wingles gun made this spot so unpleasant that a move was made to the trench that "B" and "D" Companies were digging. It was now dusk—there was no summer-time in 1915—and to all appearance the enemy was far away. But the Regiment was out in the blue by itself—it was joined a couple of hours after arrival by the

remnants of the 2nd Brigade, from whose fighting value the day's experience had naturally detracted—and to make the position tenable was essential. The ground was tough chalk, and picks and shovels were unobtainable; only entrenching tools were at hand. The men were very tired, and to keep them awake and at work it was necessary to drive them hard. The 2nd Brigade had established its headquarters in the Chalk Pit; an appeal there that picks and shovels might be telephoned for was not successful. So the weary scraping in the solid chalk with inadequate tools continued hour after hour through the night, and hourly also, having realised that the advance was not proceeding, the enemy became more active. Rifle fire, at first non-existent, became incessant; after midnight one or two half-hearted attempts at counter-attack were easily beaten off, but casualties began to occur frequently. Among these, hit by a bullet and killed instantly, was the medical officer, Captain R. Montgomery, a most gallant Scotsman, who never spared himself, and who had done wonderful work for the Regiment. In the small hours of this morning, too, Captain Bosanquet had one of his numerous narrow escapes. Standing watching the work he suddenly fell forward and lay motionless on the ground. Those present feared that at last the fates had been too strong for him, and their suspicion became certainty when, in the light of a shaded torch, a bullet hole was found in his jacket on each side of his backbone. These holes were repeated in a waistcoat that he had on under his jacket and in his shirt, but when his back was examined no wounds were found. After a few minutes he recovered completely; doubtless his temporary unconsciousness was the result of the shock caused by a bullet almost grazing his spine.

Information was received during the night that troops of the reserve corps would pass through the Regiment to advance to the second objective, and at about 3 a.m. on 26th September a brigade of the 21st Division began to arrive. After a conference between the brigadiers it was decided that a battalion of the new brigade should take over from the Regiment, as the latter was required to rejoin the 3rd Brigade. The 8th Lincolnshire was eventually detailed for this duty, and after considerable delay the relief began at 5 a.m.; it was broad daylight before the last man was out. "B" and "D" Companies suffered heavy loss from rifle and machine-gun fire in enfilade from the left, while

getting from the trench to the cover of the wood; the last to leave had to crawl over the open space, and many of them were hit. It was not possible to extricate the machine guns, commanded by Lieutenant G. E. Clairmonte, so he was ordered to stay where he was and to rejoin the battalion when he could. Neither he nor any of his men were seen again; his body and those of some of his men were found years afterwards, and there is little doubt that they were all killed when the Lincolnshire, later in the day, was driven back by the Germans. Lieutenant Clairmonte had but lately joined the 28th; though very young he was vigorous, cheerful and intelligent; he would have done well. The machine-gun detachment was highly trained; it consisted of selected men whose places were difficult to fill. It is a tribute to the hard work of the Regiment that, despite fatigue and the lack of proper tools, the trenches handed over to the Lincolnshire were three feet deep and well traversed.

Having assembled down the hill, west of the Loos-Hulluch road, the Regiment marched to Le Rutoire Farm, which was now smashed beyond recognition. The cooks were here, and everyone, except the indefatigable Adjutant who set off to find 3rd Brigade Headquarters, had an excellent breakfast, the first hot meal since the tea and rum at Philosophe. At 8.30 a.m. the Adjutant returned with orders to move into the old German front line south of Bois Carrée. As the 28th advanced MAP 5 past Lone Tree on the fine fresh morning it was interesting to study the aftermath of the battle. At 9.40 a.m.—soon after the old German line was reached—orders were received to support an attack on Hulluch at 11 a.m. These orders were afterwards cancelled, and the Regiment stayed where it was until relieved by Irish Guards on 29th September. During this time the rain dripped down, and the conditions in the wet and battered trenches were most displeasing. On the evening of the 28th “B” Company was moved forward to occupy a part of the new front line, which ran just west of the Lens-Hulluch road. This position was reached by a long German communication trench, which formerly led from the line to Hulluch; it was now but a wreck of what it had been, and by daylight the passage of its slippery length was a much sniped operation. On the 26th the Regiment made its first acquaintance with gas shells, when the old German line was bombarded with these projectiles in the late afternoon. It was only the lachrymatory type, and the

effect was negligible, but so thoroughly had the dangers of gas been rubbed in that a number of people not ordinarily subject to easy terrors presented themselves to the doctors; some of them, owing to the medical authorities being equally careful, were actually sent to England. After relief on the night of the 29th the Regiment proceeded by companies to Noeux-les-Mines—"B" Company did not arrive until 3 a.m. on the 30th—and went into excellent billets in the Mazingarbe road on the western outskirts of the town.

MAP I

Here, as far as the 28th was concerned, ended the first phase of the Battle of Loos, and no one was sorry to rest idly in the warmth and comfort of the town, for it was evident that the respite would be short. Noeux was a good sized mining place notable for its many estaminets, where the men could spend the evenings agreeably, and for its large brown speckled spiders. Béthune was only five miles away, and it was pleasant to walk there of an afternoon to enjoy the highest form of civilisation that was available. There was a church parade on 2nd October, and on the 3rd the men had baths at Fosse 3. Captain H. E. de R. Wetherall rejoined on the 4th, having recovered from the serious wound that had laid him up since October 1914, and took command of "B" Company; his advent was welcome because the stock of experienced pre-war officers, though well maintained till now, was beginning to run low. The rest ended rather abruptly, and on the evening of 5th October, a day of pouring rain, the Regiment went forward to take over from the 5th Royal Berkshire the line at the Chalk Pit near Bois Hugo; the Battalion and Company Commanders went to Loos in the morning and were led by guides to their respective headquarters. The guide allotted to the Commanding Officer was a cheerful youth; he started off gaily along the more easterly of the two roads leading from Loos to Hulluch. After the leader and led had gone some way, the latter, knowing something of the lie of the land, became a little uneasy, but, unwilling to appear other than bold in the presence of his confident guide, he followed on. Finally the unperturbed young soldier plunged straight into our front line trench, not 150 yards from the enemy and in the territory of the battalion holding the line north of his own, turned to his right and led his flustered victim correctly to the headquarters of the 5th Berkshire.

The line that the Regiment was now to occupy ran along

MAP 5 the south-east side of a long narrow wood, at the eastern end of which was the Chalk Pit, and, turning north, followed the Lens-La Bassée road on its western side. The Regiment was to hold it from a point about 100 yards south-west of the wood to a point about 100 yards north of the Chalk Pit. The Germans opposite were in trenches along the northern side of Puits 14 Bis and the Bois Hugo; their line turned north about 450 yards east of the road and continued more or less parallel with ours. Our line marked the farthest position reached by the counter attack by which the Guards Division had on 27th September restored the situation caused by the retirement of troops of the 21st Division.

The 28th was settled in by midnight, and work was at once begun to make good the very obvious deficiencies of the position. There were no support trenches, and the front line, much battered by incessant shelling, gave the impression that little work had been done there since the Guards had first dug in. The ravages of days of shell fire had never been repaired; the parapets and traverses were everywhere collapsed. Digging and revetting went on incessantly from the moment of taking over, but though there was not a shelter in the line, except a table under which "B" Company made its headquarters, no time could be spared for making them. One indifferent communication trench led from the Loos-Hulluch road, and water and rations had to be fetched nightly over a most unpleasant piece of ground. Headquarters was in a lime kiln in the side of the deep Chalk Pit; it was pretty well shell-proof, though on one occasion a fuse alighted among the officers of the battalion staff while at their evening meal; but the spot was much favoured by the German guns, and the journey across the Chalk Pit and up its steep side, to get into the line, was generally exciting. The kiln had the hardest floor in France. There were, however, compensations. After the first evening the weather was dry; there was wood everywhere, and the issue of coke was abundant, so that no one ever had to do without a fire. One piece of trench alongside the wood, about 100 yards from the angle at the Chalk Pit, was so particularly shelled that it was not occupied; consequently the rest of the line was overcrowded. Two platoons of "D" Company were therefore moved to a trench beside the Loos-Hulluch road; on the 7th an extra 100 yards of line was taken over on the left so one of these platoons was brought forward again.

The hostile shelling continued throughout the 6th; it increased on the 7th, and casualties were numerous. The work on the line, however, went on steadily, and by the morning of the 8th the position had been greatly strengthened. And well it was; for not only was 8th October the chosen day for the great German counter attack that was to restore their situation at Loos, but the capture of the Chalk Pit, in the eyes of the enemy the key to the position, was to be the main objective of the assault.

The morning of the 8th of October opened fairly, though the air was cold; hostile shelling had abated, and life seemed pleasanter than on the previous days. At 11 a.m. shelling began; by 11.30 a.m. it had become a definite bombardment; it continued with increasing intensity until 4.15 p.m. In enfilade and from the front, the Chalk Pit and the trenches on either side of its salient were overwhelmed with a hail of 8-inch and 5.9-inch shells; the fire was the severest to which the Regiment was subjected during the war. Traverse after traverse was knocked in and flattened out; casualties increased steadily. There was nothing to be done but to sit still and await the infantry attack which obviously would succeed the bombardment.

The passive watchers in the trenches actually saw shells arriving in showers of tiny specks; each cluster of specks, a fraction of a second after its appearance, resulted in a series of rending crashes. A remarkable experience, but after the first hour or two, one that shook one's moral fibre considerably, despite all efforts to feel and to appear lighthearted. The men bore the strain—nearly five hours of it—with admirable calmness, though they failed to grasp the fact that the enemy would not attack with infantry till his guns stopped; it was continually necessary to prevent them from clambering on to the fire step to see how things were going. All communications had been cut early in the proceedings, and the smoke and dust of the bombardment blotted out the line completely to observers from behind. An appreciable period had elapsed after the show was over, before the higher commanders were aware whether we still held the line or whether the enemy had got it.

The bombardment stopped at 4.15 p.m. with noticeable suddenness, and the German infantry, issuing in dense masses from the portion of the Bois Hugo opposite the Chalk Pit and from their trenches running northward from the wood, at once advanced against our line. Thin skirmishing lines only moved

against the Munsters on the right, and the attack did not extend as far as the extreme left of the 28th's position; its main weight was flung against the Chalk Pit and the trenches on each side of it. As the shelling stopped, every man was instantly on the fire step, pumping well aimed lead into the oncoming hordes. The machine guns, sited at the salient of the line, did great execution, while at the very moment that the German gun fire ceased, our supporting artillery, that of the 15th Division, opened with every gun on the attackers. Memory fails to recall whether they began to shoot on pre-arranged lines immediately the enemy's fire stopped or whether they succeeded in observing when the conditions defeated all other observers, but, whatever the means of direction, their opening was timed to the second, and their fire was accurate and effective. Combined with that of the infantry it rapidly dealt with the situation; the advancing troops of the enemy, suffering very heavily, first wavered, then checked and finally stopped altogether. None, save one unarmed German, a sailor who said that he disliked land fighting, got within 40 yards of our line. Desultory shooting on our part went on till dusk, but within ten minutes of its start the attack had been broken, and the attackers were trying, at great cost to themselves, to get back to the cover of the woods.

It is estimated that six battalions were employed by the enemy in the attack at the Chalk Pit; his losses must have been heavy. No doubt he expected that the intense bombardment would have subdued all resistance and that he would overrun our position easily; on this occasion, however, he reckoned without his host. The Regiment lost about 130 men, but had a good fight; all ranks were overjoyed when the time came to meet the attackers with the bullet, thus to get their own back, not only for the shelling that they had endured earlier in the day, but also for the never forgotten May the ninth. In many cases, when the shooting began, wounded men, stripped of their shirts for the dressing of their wounds, were on the fire step taking their part in the battle; it was instructive to hear eager marksmen counting aloud their hits. In such a fight all did well, but outstanding was the work of the signalling sergeant, Sergeant Biddle. When the war began he was signalling storeman, beyond which height it is probable that his military ambition never would have soared. The war proved him to be a real leader of men as well as a most courageous fighter who enjoyed

his fighting. He finished up as a company sergeant-major with a Military Cross, a D.C.M. and bar and a Military Medal and bar; he deserved every one of them.

In the evening the 28th, relieved by the 1st South Wales Borderers, withdrew into support. Nearly everyone was stiff and sore from clouts received from flying chunks of iron, but all were pleased with themselves. For this action the thanks of the Commanders of the Army, the Corps, the Division and the Brigade were received. The remarks of the Brigade Commander are worth quoting:-

“Orders have already been issued by the G.O.C.’s. 1st Army, 4th Corps and 1st Division showing their appreciation of the work done by the 3rd Brigade and attached troops on 8th October. The G.O.C. 3rd Infantry Brigade also wishes to thank the brigade for their very successful action on that day. In the 3rd Brigade the brunt of the fight fell on the 1st Gloucestershire Regiment. They stood the heavy shelling splendidly and were ready to meet the enemy with fire directly he advanced. The hard work they had previously done on their trenches helped much to lessen their casualties. The Artillery were also much assisted by a small party of the 1st Gloucestershire Regiment who volunteered to carry up ammunition over open ground that was being heavily shelled.”

The latter part of the above Brigade order refers to the pioneers, left behind near Quality Street, a mile south-east of MAP 1 Philosophie, in charge of the battalion ammunition reserve. These men carried ammunition to the guns, which were in action close to their billets.

The support line, on the south-east side of the Loos-Hulluch MAP 5 road, which was occupied until 12th October, was a miserable abode, shelled incessantly with heavy stuff; it was an unkempt place containing shelters of sorts though none were shell-proof, and all were infested with rats and mice. Casualties occurred continually; at 2 a.m. on 11th October a direct hit by a big shell on shelters occupied by the machine gunners killed Lieutenant L. C. Brown, who had fought his guns so well on the 8th, and one gunner, wounding seven others. During the Loos fighting the machine gunners had lost very heavily. All three officers and both sergeants were either killed or wounded, and

after this last catastrophe there were only six of the men left. On 9th, 10th and 11th October the whole battalion was employed from 7 p.m. till 1 a.m. each night on the construction of a new front line at the Chalk Pit, so that the existing one might become a support line; while at this work it got good evidence of the efficiency of its marksmanship on 8th October.

On 12th October the 1st South Wales Borderers was relieved in the Chalk Pit trenches, and at once the Regiment became involved in further unpleasantness. The First Army had been ordered to continue the attack on 13th October; the task of the 4th Corps was to occupy the line of the Lens-La Bassée road between the Chalk Pit and the Vermelles-Hulluch road. The 1st Brigade was to carry out this operation, its right being directed on a point 200 yards north of the junction of the Loos-Hulluch and the Lens-La Bassée roads, its left on a point 800 yards north of this. The 2nd Brigade was in support; the 3rd Brigade, holding the line from the Chalk Pit sector to the right, was to aid the attack by making demonstrations, without leaving its trenches. The attack was timed to begin at 2 p.m. The mission of the Regiment was to hold the enemy in front of it; first by throwing smoke bombs for an hour before the time of the attack, then, at the moment of the attack, by manning the fire steps and opening rapid fire at the opposite parapet. One smoke bomb was to be thrown every three minutes on each ten yards of front and was to be propelled as far as possible. The bombs were only to be thrown from portions of the trench so situated that the smoke would blow towards the hostile line. The object of the manoeuvre was to create a smoke-screen that would roll towards the enemy and encourage the belief that we were about to advance behind it, thus preventing the withdrawal of reserves to reinforce the resistance to our real attack on the left.

The attention of the Germans was attracted with complete success, and until dusk the Regiment was most thoroughly trounced with high explosive shells. The shelterless state of the trenches ensured that this would be effective; by the evening five officers and 50 men had been killed and wounded. Among those killed was Captain R. D. Scott, who for 13 years had served in the 2nd Battalion and at the Depot; since joining the 28th in January 1915 he had commanded "A" Company with ability. Lieutenant R. A. Angier was wounded for the second

time during the battle; he had successfully avoided being sent away after his first wound, but the second was very serious, and he was in hospital for months afterwards. In the evening, once more relieved by the South Wales Borderers, the Regiment returned to the uncomfortable support line. On the next night the 22nd London Regiment took its place, the whole line held by the 1st Division being taken over by the 47th Division. The 28th went back to Mazingarbe where draughty billets in strawless empty houses were reached at 10 p.m. Next morning the Regiment marched to Noeux-les-Mines and went by train to Lillers, where it detrained at 1.30 p.m. and marched to Allouagne. Here the area allotted to the 28th was already in possession of a field ambulance and part of the Headquarters of the Cavalry Corps; for a long time, hoping for somewhere to lay their heads, the troops sat on the curb stones while efforts were made to rescue the billets from their unlawful occupants. Much trouble was experienced with a fire-eating R.A.M.C. colonel; finally it was necessary to invoke the Brigade in order to obtain protection from him and from the elements.

MAP I

Thus ended the participation of the Regiment in the battle of Loos. Its total casualties therein were 5 officers and 63 other ranks killed and 5 officers and 251 other ranks wounded, a total of 324. During the period two officers and 71 other ranks were received as reinforcements. For weeks the 28th had dug and delved and fetched and carried in preparation for the battle; it had fared strenuously during the battle both in fighting and in fatigue; from the battle it had emerged with honour. Report now had it that this emergence was the beginning of a long period of rest, and all were glad to hope for rest though few, perhaps, believed the rumour.

Had adequate reserves been available, the attack at Loos might well have resulted in a considerable victory. The assaults between Hulluch and the La Bassée road, after initial successes, were allowed to degenerate into dog fights with bombs, at which method of warfare the Germans, owing to their superior weapons, were our masters. But from Hill 70 to Hulluch, owing to the magnificent advance of the 47th and 15th Divisions, there was a definite break-through, and on 25th September, from 6.30 a.m. until the late evening, the Germans were certainly on the run. If the 4th Corps had had a division close up in reserve to push through the gap, ignoring the gallant resistance

of the troops opposed to the 1st Division, Hill 70 and Hulluch would have been occupied very early in the morning; had a strong general reserve existed, in the hands of the Army Commander and placed reasonably close to the battle, it is probable that the Germans reverse would have been really important; the results might even have coincided with the full intentions of the Allied commanders. However much the handling of the reserves that were available may be criticised, there is no doubt that the British Commander-in-Chief was correct in his opinion that his armies were not yet strong enough for so large an operation as the Battle of Loos.

CHAPTER V

CAUCHY A LA TOUR AND TRENCHES NORTH OF LOOS

AFTER getting possession of its rightful dwelling place, late in the evening of Friday 15th October, the Regiment settled down comfortably at Allouagne, though the billets were a little crowded. Training began on the Saturday, and while so engaged the Regiment was visited by General Holland, who expressed himself well satisfied with its performance in the battle. His praise was hard to come by; therefore, as he had already commended it, the 28th was assured that the divisional commander appreciated its work.

A match at rugby football with the 2nd Welch had been arranged for the afternoon of this Saturday, but lack of a ball prevented the game; it took place next day, and the Regiment won by 5 points to nothing. On 19th October a move was made to Cauchy à la Tour. On arrival, each company, welcomed joyfully by the owners, went to the billets that it had previously occupied. Even the most sceptical were at last convinced that the divisional rest had really materialised.

Everyone enjoyed this stay at Cauchy, which lasted till 14th November. The men were comfortable owing to the friendliness of the natives, who generally spared no pains in the interests of their lodgers. The estaminets were warm, even if the beer was weak, and were pleasant rendezvous for the men during the long evenings. Auxiliary to them a regimental coffee shop was established, which it was generally possible to keep fairly well stocked with the things that soldiers want to buy. Clean clothing was issued soon after arrival, and there were four bathing parades at the baths in the neighbouring village of Raimbert. Training took place in the mornings and was finished daily by 1 p.m. The importance of ample leisure for all ranks when they were away from the line was recognised on this occasion as, in the 1st Division, it nearly always was. Battalion drill was practised on several occasions, probably, as far as the Regiment was concerned, for the first time in France since the days of the Napoleonic wars. A large field on the north-eastern outskirts of the village was used for the purpose, and

here the 28th formed square on the march, advanced in echelon, wheeled, and did numerous other interesting manœuvres. This steady drill was of considerable value as an antidote to the results of trench warfare; it also reminded the pre-war soldier of the days of peace and was a new experience to the soldier who had joined for the war. In fact the men enjoyed it, and during the next two and a half years it was carried out whenever possible. A great deal of musketry training was done; it was necessary to go warily when riding round the work of a morning because every slag heap was a stop butt, and was often being fired at from more than one direction. Digging was not mentioned in the syllabus of training, nor was bombing overdone, though the whole battalion was practised once, a company at a time, in the trenches of the bombing school at Ferfay. There were many wet days, but otherwise the weather was fair.

In the afternoons there were numerous inter-company matches at both sorts of football. The Regiment did well at rugby. The 1st South Wales Borderers was beaten by 20 points to nothing in a dull game, played in pelting rain. The 6th Welch, now attached to the Brigade, was twice defeated, by 8 points to 3 and by 3 points to nothing. A XV teeming with international and other first-class players, brought by the Staff Captain of the 3rd Brigade, was beaten by 6 points to 5 owing to the superior combination of the 28th. On the day before the return to the line, the officers beat the sergeants by 19 points to 6, though on form the latter should have won. At Association the Munsters, South Wales Borderers and a team of the Army Service Corps were played and beaten. Brigade and divisional boxing tournaments were held; at these the Regiment did little good.

Concerts often took place in a sort of village hall on the opposite side of the road to Headquarters. The first was got up and carried out by the 2nd Welch for the amusement of the 28th, a kindly attention which the Regiment was unable to reciprocate owing to lack of histrionic and musical talent. Another was given by the Regiment, aided by the Divisional Chaplain's cinema, various French soldiers on leave and the divisional band, for the benefit of the inhabitants; the whole population was present. A third, attended by the Divisional Commander and the Brigadier, was somewhat marred by one of the leading performers getting very drunk between his first

and second turns; it was with difficulty that he was persuaded to withdraw.

A large allotment of leave for the men was expected during this long period away from the line, but although small parties went at regular intervals, the men who joined the 28th in November 1914 were only now getting their first leave, a state of affairs that compared badly with that existing in most of the contending armies.

Only six officers and 111 men joined the Regiment at Cauchy though 360 were required to complete the establishment. Among the officers was Captain D. Baxter who, having recovered from a bad wound incurred in October 1914, had joined the 61st and later had been invalided; he was an able officer, and his return was invaluable to the 28th. On 4th November Captain Vinen went as an instructor to the G.H.Q. Cadet School at St. Omer, and his company was taken over by Lieutenant Godfrey. Captain Bosanquet was still Adjutant; the Company Commanders were: "A," Captain D. Baxter; "B," Captain H. E. de R. Wetherall; "C," Captain N. Durant; "D," Lieutenant H. T. D. Godfrey.

On 28th October a composite company of the Regiment, commanded by Captain Wetherall, marched to Labeuvriere together with other units of the 1st Division to be inspected by His Majesty the King. On November 11th, a cold wet day, the 3rd Brigade paraded in a field near Ferfay for inspection by the Corps Commander, who arrived half an hour late and addressed complimentary remarks regarding the recent fighting to the assembled battalions. While at Cauchy, too, the 28th first got news of the impending departure of the 61st to Salonika.

It had been announced that during the winter season, unless the fortune of war decided otherwise, each division would do two months in the line followed by one at rest and training; this news mitigated one's natural distaste at beginning once more the dreary existence in winter trenches, with its accompanying mud and general discomfort. Still, no one was pleased when orders came for the move forward. This took place on 15th November, and the Regiment, marching by way of Marles and Labuissieres, went into quarters in the Bracquemont suburb—on the Arras road—of Noeux-les-Mines. These, certain bad billets having been cast and better ones occupied, were quite

good, and the Regiment remained in them, the 3rd Brigade being in divisional reserve, until 19th November. Noeux was a strange town; packed with troops, both French and English, its streets inches deep in mud from incessant traffic, full of estaminets and queer places of entertainment, it was a typical place of sojourn for troops either journeying towards the line or just come out from it.

MAP 6 The next move of the 28th was to relieve the 1st Cameron Highlanders in support trenches at Loos. These were, more or less, those that had been occupied on 14th October: the trench running along the Loos-Hulluch road, now called Gun Alley, and, in addition, a trench alongside the Loos-Haisnes road, called Loos Alley. The place was in little better condition than it had been in October and required much hard work, principally the construction of dugouts, the laying of trench boards and the digging of drainage pits. The work was aided on 22nd November by an impenetrable fog which permitted free movement outside the trenches. Headquarters, formerly in a shanty in the parados of the trench, now lived comfortably in the most northerly house of Loos, close to the junction of the two roads beside which the trenches ran, with excellent dugouts attached to it. Before the battle of Loos this house had been occupied by Beckhaus, Hauptmann, Batterie-chef, 5 Batterie, who had left his notice-board behind him. Here the 28th was visited by members of the Miners' Trade Union, including Tom Richards, then the secretary, and Frank Hodges. Afterwards, headed by Mr. Richards, who was neither young nor agile, they walked for miles in the part of the front line held by Welsh troops, experiencing many varieties of German hostility on the way.

On 23rd November the 1st South Wales Borderers was relieved once again in the Chalk Pit sector of the line. There were now front and support trenches here, a much improved communication trench and good dugouts of reasonable depth, forerunners of the real deep dugout. Though the trenches were so greatly improved, the weather was bad; intense frost and cold alternated with sleety rain. Headquarters, instead of being in the Chalk Pit, practically in the line and comparatively safe, was in a perfectly loathsome farm on the Loos-Hulluch road. By the route that had to be taken it was at least 1,000 yards from the front line, and being obviously known to the Germans as a headquarters, was shelled daily with 5.9's;

the cellar would not have stopped a pipsqueak. On the right of the 28th was the French 90th Regiment.

Our artillery carried out a programme of daily bombardments, thus drawing a deal of fire from hostile field guns placed close to the line, a particularly disturbing type of retaliation because the shells swished over the trench without any preliminary warning, apparently all but grazing the top of one's head. The section of trench that had to be evacuated in October was still untenable; it would be interesting to know why it was pounded so incessantly. At 9.30 a.m. on 25th November a vigorous bombardment of Headquarters began. After hitting various buildings and evicting their inhabitants the Germans got six 5.9's in succession into the courtyard of the farm and finally one into the kitchen, destroying much priceless foodstuff, the contents of parcels from home. Everyone hurried from the cellar to a nearby trench, and as soon as the outbreak ceased Headquarters moved to the lime kiln in the Chalk Pit. This was a great improvement, though the place had developed a habit of forming stalactites, which dripped unpleasantly on the inmates. There were few casualties during the tour in the line, but one signaller, No. 7177 Corporal B. Rogers, who was killed while mending a telephone line, was a great loss; for ever at work at his lines he was a fine example of the expert who loved his job and whose energies were minimised neither by hardship nor by danger. The war produced many such men, particularly among the signallers and runners.

The Regiment, changing over once more with the South Wales Borderers, returned to Gun and Loos Alleys on the 26th, leaving "A" Company in close support in Tosh Alley, a trench that ran along the northern side of the Loos-La Bassée road at its exit from the village; it had been designed by, and was named after, the lively self-confident sapper subaltern who, with technical advice, had helped "C" Company to put Orchard Farm in a state of defence on 25th January. Hard frosts and snow, followed by heavy rain, were now the order of the weather; as a result the trenches were very wet. On 30th November the Regiment returned to the Chalk Pit sector and there endured severe shelling, disagreeable weather and sticky mud. Headquarters, now in the cellars of a ruined house on the north-easterly outskirts of Loos, was much too far from the line for effective command to be exercised.

On December 3rd the Brigade moved into divisional reserve, and the 28th, relieved by the 2nd Royal Sussex, went to billets in Mazingarbe. Three companies were away by 9.30 p.m., but the relief for "B" Company got lost because its commander, averring that he knew his way, refused his guides. He was
MAP 1 eventually found by Captain Wetherall, sometime after midnight; in consequence it was 2.45 a.m. on the 4th before "B" Company and Headquarters reached their billets, which, except those of the officers, were good. Everyone was delighted to get into them, for fifteen consecutive days in trenches at this time of year imposed considerable strain on both officers and men, added to which the shelling during the period had been trying, though the casualties were small. The stay in Mazingarbe lasted till 8th December. During the time large working parties were required of the Regiment, to the detriment of training. There was a good canteen in the village, where tea and food were provided and where the divisional band played and cinematograph shows took place; it was always full of men. When the somewhat sombre joys of the stay at Mazingarbe came to an end, the 3rd Brigade returned to the line, on the left instead of on the right of the divisional front. The Regiment went forward to replace the 1st Cameron Highlanders in support positions in the old German first and second line trenches astride the Vermelles-Hulluch road, with "C" Company in close support to the South Wales Borderers in the line. Starting from the eastern exits of Vermelles the trenches were reached—as had
MAP 6 been our forward ones opposite them—by Le Rutoire Alley, although its course had varied somewhat. The area allotted to the Regiment in no way sufficed for the number of men to be accommodated, hence the available shelters were uncomfortably crowded. The weather was wet and unpleasant. Day and night large parties were provided to work in the front line, which was in a deplorable state: trenches falling in everywhere, thick mud, no duck boards, communication trenches, with one exception, knee deep in slime; incessant labour was required to make the place habitable. On 11th December the 1st South Wales Borderers was relieved in the sector of the line opposite Hulluch and Cité St. Elie, about 600 yards from the former place. The 6th Welch held the line on the right, and the 47th Division was on the left. The weather continued to be abominable. Although there was a good deal

of shelling it was far less severe than that in the Chalk Pit part of the world.

On 14th December the 28th, relieved by the 2nd Welch, went back to billets in Philosophe, leaving "A" and "D" Companies in the old German trenches about the Vermelles-Hulluch road. The billets in empty houses in Philosophe were draughty but might have been much worse, while "A" and "D" Companies had plenty of room in the shelters that had been tested beyond their capacity to house the whole battalion. Much work had to be done, generally knee deep in liquid mud, both in the line and to maintain Le Rutoire Alley, which was often blown in by vicious bombardments. The Regiment returned to the line on the 17th and found it altogether a more pleasant place, for the work done by the Division was producing results. The trenches, no longer insanitary broken down ditches, were deep, dry and boarded throughout their length, with well revetted parapets and paradoss; even the communication trenches were beginning to be passable. The numerous collapsed dugouts were gradually being pulled down and rebuilt, yielding in the process many bodies, both British and German, relics of the Loos fighting. The weather was better than it had been since the autumn. About this time the Regiment became involved in a quarrel with the truculent commander of a neighbouring battalion; he had criticised, rudely and wrongfully, the manners and discipline of the machine-gun detachment, which was stationed temporarily in his line. The strife appeared, from the point of view of the 28th, about to be brought to a successful conclusion, when the adversary was suddenly translated to higher regions—a brigade, not heaven—and the expected triumph had to be foregone.

The 2nd/60th replaced the Regiment in the line on the evening of 20th December. The passage of Le Rutoire Alley after relief was made uncomfortable by heavy hostile shelling. However all such unpleasantness was forgotten when, after passing through Vermelles and reaching the main road, the troops discovered that the journey to Noeux was to be made in motor buses instead of on foot. To convey the whole battalion MAP 1 the buses had to do the journey twice, so that it was after 2 a.m. on the 21st before the last arrivals were in their billets, which were much the same as those occupied in November. On Christmas Day the companies, half a battalion at a time, had

their dinners in the local school. The seasonable fare was provided by friends of the Regiment in England; for this everyone was properly grateful. The officers also dined together, possibly for the first time since landing in France; including guests, 32 were present. Luckily there was a large room available in the house occupied by Headquarters, but in spite of its size the diners were so closely packed that they had difficulty in moving their arms sufficiently freely to get food and drink into their mouths. The owner of the house, her children and her neighbours took immense trouble to make the party a success.

On 26th December the 3rd Brigade—in divisional reserve since the 20th—returned to the line; the Regiment, in brigade
MAP 6 reserve, marched, a company at a time, to Philosophe East, where it went into comfortable billets. This part of the village was inhabited by the families whose men and boys worked at the local coal-mine; the German artillery prevented any work by day, but at night the mine was in full swing. The working conditions of the French coal-miner during the war were in vivid contrast with those of his opposite number in Britain. In this sad shell-battered spot were several French soldiers; it was not a cheerful place in which to spend one's leave. The weather was as fine as that at Noeux had been wet. The 28th suffered a number of casualties during the bursts of fire from guns of all sizes to which the village was subjected. Garrisons of one platoon each were provided for the Lens Road Redoubt and the 65 Metre Redoubt, and every night working parties of 200 men had to be found for these redoubts and for a new reserve line, which was being made north of Loos.

On 1st January, 1916, the old familiar Chalk Pit sector was taken over once more and held till 4th January, in fair weather. The shelling, always considerable here, had increased in severity; during the four days seven men were killed and seven were wounded. The Regiment was accompanied to the line by the Commander and a senior warrant officer of one of our largest new battleships; they spent the night in the line, explored No Man's Land minutely, and having thoroughly enjoyed themselves, left in the morning accompanied down the communication trench by salvoes of shrapnel. Another day the captain and the subaltern of the nearest company of the French battalion on the right visited Headquarters. The former, stout, pale and bearded, was normally a notary in Bordeaux; the latter, lean and hard,

was a professional soldier of long service in northern Africa. After relief on the 4th the Regiment withdrew to the usual reserve trenches, Headquarters going to a hovel, 300 yards south of its former pleasant house. On the 6th the billets in *Philosophe East* were once more occupied. The place was shelled on several occasions, and on the 11th it was thoroughly pounded with 8-inch shells; the Regiment lost three men wounded, and eight civilians were either killed or wounded. On the 13th the Division came out of the line; the 28th marched to Noeux, took the train as far as Lillers, detrained and marched to Raimbert. On 16th January, to the joy of everyone and to the equal satisfaction of its old friends there, it marched to Cauchy and stayed till the end of the rest period. MAP 1

During the sojourn of two months in and behind the trenches north of Loos the 28th had experienced every variety of evil weather and very few fine days. Hostile shelling had been severe though rifle fire had been negligible; it was noticeable that before the Battle of Loos the main danger in the line had been the bullet, whereas after that battle the shell replaced it as the bane of the trench dweller's existence. The total loss was 11 killed and 28 wounded, a surprisingly small list considering the conditions. The state of the trenches had demanded incessant work, and it may truthfully be said of the 28th, as of most regiments in the 1st Division, that it always left a trench in better order than it took it over. And should a battalion fail to attain the required standard of work, it was speedily impelled thereto by the divisional commander. If anyone was aware of the vast importance of trench maintenance and of its bearing on the safety and comfort of the line, it was General Holland. Although a gunner, he was the sole commander within one's memory to realise that infantry were not the only troops eligible to work in the forward areas. Each day during the winter at Loos he produced large parties, composed of people who usually led a dignified existence far behind, to take their part in the labour of the trenches. This was much appreciated by the front line troops. At the end of the year General Holland was given a C.B.; divisional gossip had it that the award was for his efforts to improve the line. If this was so, few decorations were better earned.

On 14th January Captain Bosanquet replaced Major Berkeley of the 2nd Welch as brigade major of the 3rd Brigade. The

latter officer, having for more than a year carried out his duties with much efficiency, earning the esteem of all who had dealings with him, now went to a higher appointment at General Headquarters. On 17th January Captain J. R. H. L. Scott-Tucker returned to the Regiment, having recovered from his severe wound of October 1914, and resumed the adjutancy to which he had been gazetted shortly before he was hit. About this time a change in policy was made as regards machine guns: battalion detachments were abolished in favour of brigade companies. On 22nd January the machine-gun detachment of the 28th was transferred to the brigade company, which was formed at Raimbert.

The weather during the divisional rest was remarkably good for the time of year. Life at Cauchy went on much as it had done in October and November of 1915—work in the morning and leisure afterwards—except that the work was more advanced. Battalion drill was still practised, but after attention had been given for a short period to the individual and the platoon, the training of the company and the battalion was undertaken. During battalion training the 28th moved out on more than one occasion to the neighbourhood of the Bois de Lamarequet to practise the attack. It had been intended that towards the close of the rest period the whole Division should set forth for three days on an exercise in open warfare. This, however, was cancelled, and the work was done from billets in the form of an exercise for the officers, without troops. The Division had set out on 7th February as if for its three days in the country, and not until some time after the start were the cancelling orders issued; then, after a march of 18 miles relieved by a halt for a midday meal, everyone returned to their old billets. The inhabitants welcomed them gladly, but evidently felt that they had been made the victims of a poor sort of practical joke. On 20th January, a cold and very wet day, the 3rd Brigade lined the roads near the bombing school at Ferfay in honour of a visit by Marshal Joffre. After several false alarms caused by ambulances and other traffic, the Allied Commander, arriving an hour after his time, was saluted successfully.

Brigade and divisional boxing tournaments were held, and a number of rugby football matches were played by the Regiment. These began with a drawn game with the 2nd Welch, neither side scoring. Then, after the 26th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery,

and the Divisional Train had been beaten by 54 points to nothing and 16 points to 5 respectively, an overwhelming beating by 17 points to nothing was experienced at the hands of the 6th Welch, which thus avenged two earlier defeats. Finally, the 8th Battalion of the Regiment, at rest ten miles away, sent its XV, accompanied by 150 of its officers and men, to play a drawn match, with no score on either side, with the 28th. This was the first meeting of the two battalions. Early in the stay at Cauchy a second Christmas dinner for the companies took place, owing to large quantities of provisions from England, too late for the first meal at Noeux, having become available.

On 4th February the Brigadier and the Battalion Commanders went forward by bus to explore the trenches that the Division was to occupy in the near future, while on the 11th a similar visit was made by the Battalion and Company Commanders of the Brigade. On 14th February, the rest period being finished, the Regiment left Cauchy to return to the line. The people of this very pleasant village, never again to be the dwelling place of the 28th, were really fond of the men; twelve years later, when two officers revisited it, enquiries were made on all sides for individual soldiers by name.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRENCHES SOUTH OF LOOS—THE DOUBLE CRASSIER— LES BRÉBIS—CALONNE

THE 1st Division took over from the 47th, which had relieved the French there, the part of the line immediately south of
MAP 6 Loos, together with the "Loos Defences." The line was divided into two: usually called the Maroc Sector and the Loos Sector. Each of these was again divided into a right and a left sub-sector. Two brigades were in front, the other being in reserve in the small town of Les Brébis. With slight variations of front, this bit of the line was held by the Division until its departure to take part in the Somme battle, early in July. In the 3rd Brigade the Regiment and the 6th Welch relieved each other in the left portion of the Maroc Sector and in the right portion of the Loos Sector; the Munster Fusiliers and the South Wales Borderers took turns in the other sub-sectors. About the middle of May the 6th Welch became the Divisional Pioneer Battalion and was replaced by the 2nd Welch, until then the garrison of
MAP 1 the Loos Defences. Les Brébis was two miles from the front line; formerly a hamlet straggling along the road from Mazingarbe to Bully Grenay it was now a model village inhabited by miners; its principal architectural feature, besides the large church, was the office of the company owning the numerous mines in the neighbourhood. In this fine red brick building were established the headquarters of the three brigades of the 1st Division; the brigadiers and their staffs lived in excellent houses westward of the town, once occupied by important mine officials, who, presumably, had fled. Les Brébis was divided into billeting areas, each to accommodate one battalion. The inhabitants were still in their houses despite the daily shelling of the place; in consequence, they being kindly folk and their dwellings comfortable, the billets were most agreeable, particularly those in the southern area.

The Regiment marched via Raimbert to Lillers, went by train to Noeux, marched via Mazingarbe to Les Brébis and halted in billets near the church. The transport went by road and

for the next five months stayed in Les Brébis, close to the local mine, which was the chief mark of the German guns that shot at the village. At 5.30 p.m. the move to relieve the 8th London Regiment in the Loos Sector was resumed. The route crossed the railway just east of the town and went over rather desolate ground, through drab and scattered cottages, to the roadside hamlet of Maroc, passing on the left the high wall, breached in places by successions of fortifiers, of the mine named Siege 5. MAP 6 When the war began Maroc was in process of conversion into a model village like Les Brébis. There were two large blocks of decent cottages with small gardens; South Maroc, practically completed, was attractive, while North Maroc, half-finished, was less pleasing. In Maroc two long communication trenches, Piccadilly on the north side of the road and South Street on the south side, began, each leading to the line; by day all further progress was made by them. They were well constructed and properly duckboarded. South Street, the one generally used by the Regiment, reached the line to the south-west of Loos, and Piccadilly, after running through the village, alongside the Loos Crassier.

The right of the sector was about 600 yards west of the Béthune-Lens road. The front line, running south and then east, met the road at the top of a communication trench named Haymarket, 400 yards below the crest of the ridge covering Lens, and for a short distance ran south-east along the road, which it crossed and then corkscrewed eastward. The left was at the junction of South Street with the line. Headquarters was a remarkable example of successful burrowing; it was situated in the house next to the post office of Loos and had been a German headquarters, possibly improved later by the French. Part of the house was still standing, a protection to its large roomy cellars. Beneath the cellars a number of comfortable rooms, their walls and floors boarded, their ceilings lined with waterproof sheets to catch the percolating water, had been excavated. A tunnel under the road led to other chambers; kitchens, offices and quarters. This dwelling held the whole of Headquarters with ease. Opening as it did out of Piccadilly where the latter crossed the South Maroc-Loos road, its name was obvious; a notice-board inscribed "Hatchett's" was made and erected. To get to the line from here, after walking about 100 yards along the road towards South Maroc one took a trench on the left, which wriggled most fascinatingly among the ruins of several houses, up and down

steps, through doorways, rooms and cellars and joined Pont Street, leading to the Haymarket; a hundred yards farther on South Street crossed the Haymarket. By either of these trenches the front line could be reached; Haymarket, deep and high walled, was generally peaceful; South Street, shallower and lined with dugouts, was perpetually assailed after dark by fiery slow-descending trench mortar bombs, fearsome at first acquaintance, but with practice easy to avoid. The line was held with two companies—"A" on the right, "B" on the left in front; "C" was in support in South Street immediately east of the Haymarket, clear of the bombed area, and "D" was in reserve in cellars about Headquarters. The trenches were in ill repair, but the dugouts, made by the French, were excellent, a definite advance on any that the 28th had yet occupied. Hostile rifle and shell fire were moderate. Bitter gales and much tumultuous rain made the weather unpleasant.

The German use of Very lights was prodigal; at night one appeared to be surrounded by them. The fondness of our generally practical enemy for these useless illuminations has always been inexplicable. However, the fluttering slow descent of the units of the nightly firework display certainly helped to while away the hours of darkness for the sentries. The transport came right up to Loos as soon as daylight had gone and delivered its load close to Headquarters; carrying parties from the companies had an easier journey than usual with their rations, petrol tins of water and myriad other stores. With the rations came the Transport Officer, Quartermaster and the Company Quartermaster-Sergeants. The latter went to their companies, the former to Headquarters, in each case to discover the needs of the troops, so that on their return to the transport lines they might take steps to satisfy them. Frequent sicknesses caused the Quartermaster of the 28th to be more often away from the battalion than with it. His work was done efficiently from August 1915 to April 1916 by Captain M. Wilkins, the Quartermaster of the 3rd Battalion. But during the greater part of the war Quartermaster-Sergeant S. Hague did the work. It is impossible to exaggerate his value. He could be relied on in every emergency; above all he succeeded in ensuring equality with the other regiments of the Brigade, all endowed with Quartermasters. Those who know the ropes will agree that this feat alone deserves the highest praise.

On the day before the Division took over, the enemy had blown a large mine just clear of the left of the sector occupied by the Regiment; on 17th February he blew another still farther to the left. These huge mounds of earth, named Harrison's and Hart's craters respectively, were opposite the extreme ends of the portion of our line, 300 yards in length, that most nearly approached the summit of the ridge; they were probably intended for defensive purposes. Their explosion had not damaged our line, but they dominated the ridge as well as parts of our trenches. At this time, owing to the apparent neglect by the French to make any effective counter-preparation, the enemy had complete superiority in mining operations. With the advent of the 1st Division, however, the excellent No. 173 Tunnelling Company took charge of this branch of trench warfare, and the German advantage rapidly disappeared; the explosion of Hart's crater was their last successful effort. One grumbled at the voracious demands of the Tunnellers for working parties, but the longer one worked with them, the greater became one's admiration for their skill, tenacity and cheerfulness.

The spell in the line finished on 17th February; in the evening the Regiment withdrew to support positions. Headquarters occupied excellent dugouts, which were reached by a wide flight of wooden steps, in the old German front line about a hundred yards north of the Maroc-Loos road. "A" Company was also in the old German line, "C" was in a trench near Fort Glatz at the north-eastern end of Loos, "D" was in cellars in Maroc, and "B" was in South Street. Thus the companies were very scattered, and although Headquarters was settled in shortly after 9 p.m. the journey round the remaining billets was not finished till two o'clock next morning. The four days spent in support were by no means peaceful. On the night of the 18th two companies were employed in making large dugouts—urgently ordered but never used—in South Street, where it crossed the Lens road. At 4.30 a.m. on the 19th the whole battalion stood to and was sent to South Street, where it remained until the alarms and excursions abated at midday; this was a very wet pastime owing to a gale and heavy rain. At 4.20 p.m. verbal orders were received from the Brigadier that one company, with the bombers of another, was to support the left trench battalion in an attack—timed for 7.30 p.m.—on Hart's Crater and at the same time to provide a digging party to sap out to Harrison's

Crater. Another company was to move to Regent Street as a reserve to the trench battalion, under whose orders it would act. "B" and the bombers of "A" were detailed for the former duty, while "C" went to Regent Street. The sap to Harrison's Crater was successfully made; the attack on Hart's failed. Although only ordered to be ready to help in case of need, the bombers of "A" and "B" Companies were involved in the earliest stages of the combat. They lost 7 killed and 12 wounded—a large proportion—in an operation that was badly conceived and noisily executed. It is regrettable that the C.O. was not present to superintend the use of his detachment; the necessity of personal supervision in such circumstances was learned on this occasion, and the lesson was never forgotten.

The companies were back in their places by 6 a.m. on the 20th; in the evening the line was taken over again on the same frontage as before. Hostile shelling had increased, and journeys round the trenches were less pleasant than they had been. The heavy trench mortars bombarded the front line as well as South Street; these bombardments caused few casualties, but they damaged the parapets badly and smashed the wire. When the visibility allowed them to shoot, our guns retaliated well and generally quelled the disturbance, but the weather was against them. Though the dawn on 22nd February was lovely, heavy snow was falling at 9 a.m. and continued till the late afternoon. On the 23rd snow came down all day. The view from the ruined houses on the way from Headquarters to the line, over the white landscape utterly devoid of life and only relieved by the black smoke columns of exploding shells, was deceptively tranquil. Though the trenches were unpleasantly wet, the excellent dugouts, warm when filled with men, mitigated the hardship imposed by the weather. On the 23rd the Regiment

MAP 1 went into brigade reserve in the church area in Les Brébis and was settled in its billets by 10 p.m. The 24th passed quietly; everyone busied himself in getting clean after twelve days of mud and wetness and in making the billets as comfortable as possible in anticipation of a restful interlude. But before rest came, one more strenuous task had to be performed.

In the evening, just as he was setting forth on a contemplative stroll, the C.O. was urgently summoned to Brigade Headquarters. Here he found an ominous assembly: Divisional Commander, three brigadiers, attendant staffs. It transpired that Hart's

Crater was considered a menace to our position, that it must be occupied without delay and that the Regiment had been detailed to do the deed. The plan revealed by the conference was that mines already prepared under the crater should be fired at 7 p.m. on the following evening; the crater was then to be seized, and two posts established on the edge of it nearest to our line. There was little time for preparation; the principal victim resumed his interrupted stroll with something more intricate to consider than the roadside landscape.

Being unacquainted with the ground—it had always been occupied by the South Wales Borderers or the Munsters—the C.O. went up early on 25th February to complete the plan. Owing to snow, hard frost and raging wind the day was abominable; therefore the troops necessary for the operation, 7 officers and 180 men in all, joined him as late as possible in the afternoon. They were put in a trench called Regent Street, east of the sunken road leading from Loos Church to the front line; for the line had to be kept clear of troops during the great explosion. The mines were to be blown from the cellar of a ruined house at the side of the sunken road close to our foremost trench; here Headquarters was also situated. The final plan of the attack was that the parties to make the two posts on the edge of the crater, that on the right commanded by Second-Lieutenant R. W. K. Heath, that on the left under Lieutenant R. M. Hart, should go straight to their objectives directly the mines had exploded, hold the crater and start the work of consolidation at once. They were to be followed by carrying parties, each member bearing a sandbag filled with lumps of chalk. These sandbags were to be placed along the line of the communication trenches leading up the sides of the crater to the posts on the top, thus protecting the diggers until they had got deep enough for cover. Working parties following close behind the carriers would then fall-to at the communication trenches, while the carriers returned for more sandbags.

MAP 6

At 7 p.m. the mines were fired successfully. With the debris of the explosion several Germans went skywards; one of them, very little hurt, was retrieved from our wire. By this time the weather had reached the limit of vileness; an icy blizzard blew the snow parallel with the ground with ever increasing fury; the road and the trenches were so slippery that one could hardly keep one's feet. On the right all went well; before the enemy

opened fire, work on the post had been begun, the protective sandbags had been dumped, and the trench diggers were well at work. The left side of the crater, however, was raked by machine guns directly the mines exploded, and no advance was possible. Therefore the attack on this side was stopped, the crater party staying in the front line and the others joining the carriers on the right, greatly to the advantage of those building the post and of the diggers of the trench, who were well protected by the time that the enemy began machine-gun fire. The work went on steadily in arctic conditions, harassed all the time by German trench-mortar fire and occasionally by our guns shooting short; the road and the trenches were also heavily shelled. But the greatest hindrance was the going, road and trench surfaces now being of solid ice. Owing to frequent tumbles on this many of the performers were limping badly on the way home from the show. After midnight the blizzard slackened, the sky cleared, and the light of a glorious moon made the snow-clad landscape lovely. Later still about fifty Germans with fixed bayonets advanced across the crater towards our post; in a light as bright as day they were easily dispersed. If memory can be trusted the 28th used a Lewis gun for the first time in repulsing this attack. The work was finished at 5.15 a.m., and the crater was handed over to the tenants of the sector. A well-revetted post containing a solid sandbagged shelter now commanded the approaches to the crater and was joined to our front line by a good communication trench.

Second-Lieutenant Heath, killed leading the advance, one man wounded and two men hurt were the only casualties. The operation was a difficult one, carried through under difficult conditions to a successful conclusion with little loss; therefore it was satisfactory.

The detachment got back to Les Brebis about 8.30 a.m. on the 26th by way of the sunken road, Loos and Maroc, well pleased with itself and ready for breakfast and bed. The wretched C.O.—no sleep for such as he—was whisked off, before he had digested his morning meal, to describe the affair to the Divisional Commander. General Holland, critical at first because both posts had not been persevered with, admitted eventually the correctness of the abandonment of the attempt on the left and approved the conduct of the affair and the work of the 28th. He undertook that those considered most worthy should

be decorated, and Second-Lieutenant J. K. George, one of the officers in charge of the working parties, got a Military Cross and No. 1330 Sergeant Newman, a Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The weather during the stay at Les Brébis was springlike and gave false promise of the end of winter. The village was shelled daily though nothing came near the Regiment. It was pleasant to walk in the evenings by Mazingarbe and Philosophe, and, congratulating oneself on not being involved, to listen to the various battlings in the line. Leave, which had gone on steadily for some time, suddenly stopped. The reasons for these stoppages, which often appeared unnecessary, were never disclosed. No one expected leave during big operations, but the few odd men away were of no account in ordinary times. The men were still doing a year before they got their leave; though they were better looked after in every other respect than the personnel of any of the combatant armies, their visits to England were few and far between. Leave was popularly supposed to be given on the theory that the officer required more than the soldier because his responsibility was greater, and the theory is correct. But the subaltern officer went at exactly the same intervals—under normal conditions every three months—as did his battalion commander, with whose responsibility his own bore no comparison; the men of his platoon, until quite late in the war, had to wait twelve months or longer. Rumour always had it that one extra boat a day would have enabled every man in the ranks to go every six months, a very reasonable amount. Moreover, there is no doubt that the nearer one was to the base, the more leave one got; and this distressed the front-line soldier.

MAP 1

On 3rd March the Regiment went back to the line, this time to the left of the Maroc Sector, immediately south of that previously occupied. The relief of the 1st Cameron Highlanders was completed at 9.10 p.m. on a cold and snowy night, the weather having taken a change very much for the worse on the previous afternoon.

MAP 6

The Sector was of considerable interest. Its principal feature was the Double Crassier, a huge mass of mine refuse which, by reason of its dominance of the whole position, was ever a cause of grave concern to the local authorities on either side. The enemy's generals showed their anxiety by consistent bombardment of its northern arm with 5.9- and 8-inch shells from batteries in the

direction of Wingles, our higher commanders by concentration on plans for its absorption, together with the salient to the north of it, into our trench system. The former method made life near the Crassier unusually hectic; the latter began to come to fruition just before the 1st Division quitted the Loos neighbourhood. The Crassier consisted of two parallel dumps which started well behind the German forward trench system, and running a little north of west crossed the opposing lines more or less at right angles. These dumps were very high, about 1,200 yards long and quite close together, with a kind of ravine between them. Lengthways along the top of each ran trenches, relics of the time when the Germans had occupied the whole. Now a portion of each arm was held by us, and a much greater portion by the enemy. Our trench on the northern arm was longer than that on the southern. Above the trenches lay the mangled remains of the railway lines that once had carried the slag to be tipped over the ends of the dumps. About the foot of the Crassier were a network of trenches and numerous dugouts, the latter arranged higgledy-piggledy close to it. The Germans appeared to keep every kind of trench mortar in the vicinity; the variety of the bombs that arrived among our posts at the Crassier's base was astonishing. Mining and counter-mining were incessant. To the north and south the trenches were more normal; towards the left of the sector one of our saps was within hand-bombing distance of the apex of the salient, known as the Triangle, in the German line. There were many communication trenches leading from Maroc to the front line; Middle Alley, the principal and most convenient, though an excellent trench, was frequently difficult of passage owing to heavy shelling.

The right boundary of the sector was a communication trench called Liverpool Street; the left was the junction of Paris Lane with the foremost trench. There were three companies in the front line with one in reserve. "C" Company, on the right, held from Liverpool Street as far as St. James Street; it provided the posts on the top of the Crassier. Then came "D," with "B" on the left. "A," in reserve, had two platoons at Maroc, in cellars near Headquarters, and two in a trench named Dugout Row, a short length with shelters, almost touching one another, on each side; fortunately the German guns left it alone, for the crowded dwellings, though comfortable, were not shell-proof. The dugouts in the line were excellent. Headquarters was in

large warm cellars under one of the most easterly houses in Maroc. That occupied by the officers was lined on one side by a row of French bedsteads in varying states of disrepair, which formed a shelf on which there was room for everyone to sleep, two tables, one for meals and the other for office work, taking up the rest of the cavern; in the larger cellar, opening out of the first, were signallers, orderlies and servants. Washing and shaving were done among the ruins of the house above. The road outside, thick with liquid mud, was scarcely used by day, but at night the traffic was incessant, and transport, working parties and reliefs moved continuously over its uneven length.

The snow continued until late on 4th March, by which time the trenches were in a poisonous state, and the men were soaked and thoroughly uncomfortable. Owing to mud, snow and inky darkness the tour of the line after relief took from 10.30 p.m. until 5.20 a.m.; and later in the day the Brigadier's morning round, starting at 8.30 a.m., lasted four and a half hours. On the 5th and 6th the weather improved, and though hostile artillery fire increased, it was possible to repair some of the ravages of snow and shell. Owing to better dugouts and the greater depth in which the line was held casualties were far less than would have been the case a year earlier. It was, however, a tough four days; few were sorry to go back to the church area in Les Brébis on the evening of the 6th, a day of which the most remarkable event had been the explosion by the Tunnellers of a camouflet under the enemy's post on the southern arm of the Crassier in order to destroy the mine galleries that had been detected there. MAP I

During the stay in Les Brébis the weather was variable. Rain on the 7th turned to snow in the evening, continuing all night. On the 8th the sun shone brightly on a white landscape; on the evening of the 9th wet snow was once more falling. The complaint called "trench feet," caused by the liquid living conditions in the line, was at this time exercising the authorities. Commanding Officers were held responsible that the horrid disease did not invade their regiments, and more than one battalion commander came to a sticky end through its incidence among his men; but when out of the line large working parties had to be produced each night to dig or carry in slush and mud, and this made it difficult to keep immune the tired

troops, who were always soaked when they got to their billets. Save for the results of a shuddersome night in November 1916
MAP 6 the Regiment was lucky in its avoidance of the affliction.

On the evening of 10th March the Maroc Sector was again occupied. This time the front line was held with two companies: "A" on the right, "B" on the left. "D" was in support in the old German front line and in Dugout Row; "C" was in reserve in cellars in Maroc. To each company was attached for instruction a strong platoon of the 8th Royal Irish Fusiliers of the 16th Division, hence the redistribution. The weather continued to be vile; the place was unutterably desolate; the trenches, owing to incessant deluges and bombardments, were in worse condition than any occupied since those at Givenchy in January 1915. All day long on the 10th the line was heavily bombarded with big shells, particularly the northern side of the Crassier and the trenches round its base. Though the casualties, 1 killed, 2 wounded, were remarkably small, all trenches in the neighbourhood, including Middle Alley, were badly knocked about. The whole battalion worked all night to repair the damage. The 11th passed more quietly. On the 12th the Regiment got as good a doing as it had had for a long time. Shelling with 8-inch armour-piercing stuff began at 7 a.m. and continued intensively till the late afternoon. The principal targets were much as they had been on the 10th. One platoon of "A" Company held the northern arm of the Crassier, with another, commanded by No. 16162 Sergeant Drake, in support, located in a disused mine-shaft in 7th Avenue between Crassier Trench and St. James Street. These troops bore the brunt of the bombardment. Though several attempts were made, no communication with them was possible until the hail of projectiles lessened. The intense shelling by the heavy guns ceased about 4 p.m., though their fire continued steadily; in addition the area was liberally treated with shrapnel. The place was, however, approachable at last. The forward end of 7th Avenue was found to be flattened out entirely; not a sign of the mine-shaft was to be seen. That was that. Next the trench on the northern arm of the Crassier was visited. The communication trench leading up the mound was as flat as 7th Avenue; a hasty dash up the side of the Crassier landed the investigators in the trench on top. Our end of it was as flat as the other objectives of the enemy's guns, but the forward end was too close to the German trench opposite for safe shelling;

here the platoon, commanded by Lieutenant E. A. D. C. Chamier, was found, happy and unhurt.

The problem now was to discover the exact position of the obliterated mine-shaft and to release its occupants. Recourse was had to an officer of the Tunnellers, stationed close at hand. He applied his listening apparatus which indicated, more or less, the position of the buried men. Working parties were sent up from the reserve company to dig at two shell-holes suggested by the expert and at dusk were relieved by others; Lieutenant Durant directed the work. The Regiment was due to go into brigade reserve in South Maroc that night, and the arrangements for the trench relief clashed with those for the relief of the buried platoon. The work went on all night without success. From 6 a.m. till 7 a.m. on the 13th there was a break; at 6.20 a.m. Sergeant Drake and his surviving men emerged at a point midway between the excavations of the two working parties.

Both entrances to their mine-shaft had caved in at 7.15 a.m. on the 12th, at the beginning of the bombardment; for twenty-two hours they had worked to release themselves. There was soon so little air that the slightest exertion proved exhausting, and many of the men were inclined to give up hope and effort. Sergeant Drake, however, organised the whole party into reliefs, setting them at work with their entrenching tools for periods so short as to be within their powers; he cheered on or drove the faint-hearted, according to their natures. By the courage with which he faced the situation, the skill with which he organised the work and above all by his dominating personality, he saved the lives of most of his men. Only six were dead when the emergence was made, though one or two died later; at least eight were able to walk down to South Maroc. Sergeant Drake was recommended for the Victoria Cross. He was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal. Yet one recalls no deed more deserving of the highest military award than his. There is no doubt of the worthiness of his effort; every living man of the platoon testified to it. The working parties also deserve praise; they were incessantly shelled with big stuff and shrapnel but carried on steadily in spite of casualties. Ten of them were hit during the night, including Lieutenant Durant, who was killed about 9 p.m. He had joined the 28th in November 1914 and had been invalided in January, 1915. Returning in May 1915 he commanded "C" Company from August of that year till he

was superseded by an officer senior to himself—the common fate of the temporary captain—in February 1916. He did particularly good work in the Loos battle. For this affair a Military Cross was awarded to Lieutenant W. Wynter-Morgan—he did excellently during the afternoon reconnaissance—and a D.C.M. to No. 15209 Private Edmonds.

Meanwhile, after relief, the Regiment had proceeded to cellars in South Maroc, there to remain till the Brigade went into divisional reserve on 15th March. To recall the spot brings pleasant memories, for the weather was balmy, and the plentiful cellars were little shelled.

A draft of 69 men joined on 13th March, commanded by Second-Lieutenant A. Birley, who had been on the reserve for several years when the war began. He returned as a corporal and was taken prisoner early in 1914, but by a remarkable effort—few N.C.Os. succeeded in doing it—he escaped and was given a commission.

MAP 1 On 15th March, the Regiment, relieved by the 1st Northamptonshire, went with the rest of the Brigade into divisional reserve in Les Brébis. All were in their billets by 10 p.m. except a working party of 2 officers and 50 men. This party was employed

MAP 6 at a mine-shaft not far from that where the platoon of "A" Company had been confined. Its job was to fill sandbags, carry them to the entrance and pass them down the shaft for use in tamping the charges; the men worked absolutely in the open, exposed to any projectiles that were about. The enemy had detected the mine; he dealt with it to the best of his ability without displaying any great ingenuity. The spot was certainly shelled consistently throughout the night with 8-inch armour-piercers, but each batch, varying from two to seven in number, arrived exactly at the clock half-hours. Consequently, ceasing work before each flurry was due, everyone lay flat in shell holes till it was over. The night was balmy and delicious. After completing the task the workers waited till the 4 a.m. shoot was finished; then they withdrew, unhurt but for a few scratches, and were in their billets by 5.15 a.m.

MAP 1 This time the southern area in Les Brébis, much the most pleasant in the town, was occupied. There was ample room in the excellent billets. The weather was wonderful. The men were happy; their appreciation of the conditions was revealed to those whose duty it was to censor their letters. No allusion can be

found in the available records to any working parties during this spell in reserve, though such a respite seems incredible. The new draft was composed of keen and warlike men. As an example of their spirit: one, physically admirably fitted for the part, when asked if he wished to be trained as big drummer of the recently formed drums, begged, successfully, to remain with his platoon. He was killed in September 1916 in High Wood; his name is now forgotten.

The above-mentioned drums were of good value; they quickly reached a considerable standard of efficiency, and their discourses gave great pleasure to the troops when the Regiment was out of the line.

The billets were shelled fairly heavily at 8.45 a.m. on the 18th for nearly an hour, and two men were wounded. The inhabitants went about their work cheerfully despite the frequent shelling; the men and boys worked in the mine, and the women carried on their household duties; there was neither despondency nor alarm among them. One miner's wife summed up the situation when she said, "In these days, one must have character." On another occasion it was difficult to persuade the same lady that a gaggle of geese, flying in formation over the village, was not some new device of war. The anxieties of these mothers of families must have been considerable; they never knew what fresh frightfulness each day might bring.

The pleasant interlude ended on 21st March when three MAP 6 companies of the 10th Gloucestershire and one of the 1st Cameron Highlanders were relieved in the Loos Sector. The right boundary was as before; the left now extended as far as a trench called Scrub Lane. The effect of the alteration was to include Harrison's Crater in the front held, which did not improve the amenities of life. "D" Company held from the right as far as the Haymarket, "B" thence to South Street, and "C" the new and nasty part. "A" Company was in reserve in South Street; Headquarters, as before, was in Hatchett's, where quantities of daffodils were growing among the ruins. A German sniper on Harrison's Crater was troublesome; on the 22nd he killed one man and wounded two. His position, having been identified during the day, was bombarded at night with a trench mortar, and he ceased to trouble. The man killed, No. 11840 Lance-Corporal J. Blake, had joined the 28th in February 1915; he was a good soldier. The weather varied. Pelting rain was

succeeded by two fine days; the relief on the evening of the 24th was carried out in a raging snow-storm which had begun at 3 a.m. In spite of the weather, which had been mixed and often inclement since the 1st Division had come into the line in February, the health of the troops was excellent, doubtless owing to the life they led. The trench existence banished that bane of civilisation—regularity of living; one ate when it was convenient, and day and night were as one. Those whose duty led them to roam the trenches kept particularly fit. Such people generally walked at least ten miles every twenty-four hours, and their journeys were full of interest and incident.

The Regiment went into brigade reserve at North Maroc, where the cellars were good though rather crowded. Headquarters was in a draughty house, lacking doors and windows. Large parties had to be provided nightly to work in the trenches and carry stores. On the evening of the 28th the Regiment returned through pelting rain to the Loos Sector to find the trenches flooded by the melted snow. The waterproof sheets lining the ceilings of the deep down chambers in Hatchett's had often to be emptied; more than once they broke loose catastrophically owing to the weight of the water that had leaked into them. However, the weather gradually improved, and the 30th was a delightful day. Although there was some grenade fighting, the trenches were quieter than they had been. On the 29th No. 4727 Corporal W. Sayer got a direct hit with a rifle grenade while at work in the line. After serving for years in the 61st band he had gone to the permanent staff of the 3rd Battalion at Bristol, where he distinguished himself as a member of the Depot Rugby XV. The Depot forwards, of whom he was one, averaged thirty-three years in age, but they put it across those of most of the lesser rugby clubs in Gloucestershire. Corporal Sayer had joined the 28th with the recent draft and was killed during his second tour in the line.

Early on the 30th the enemy exploded an apparently aimless mine behind Harrison's Crater; it did no harm to our line but must have damaged his own considerably. Soon after dark the Regiment went into brigade support, with its companies scattered far and wide. Headquarters and "D" Company were in the old German front line, always known as "O.G. One," north of the Maroc-Loos road. "B" Company remained in South Street. "A" Company went to a little patch of houses, a miniature

garden city built in the form of a square, called the Enclosure, situated just south of Loos. "C" Company was away on the north-east side of the Loos Crassier in a similar group of buildings; its billets could be reached either by a trench over Loos Crassier or by a tunnel under it. The distribution of rations was a difficult job; the Transport Officer and the Quartermaster led strenuous lives. To visit all the companies entailed four hours' tramping round trenches, but the weather was lovely, both by day and night. General Holland's working parties from far behind were still about the place; it was a common occurrence while peregrinating the line to come across—and sometimes to rescue—flustered gangs of back area soldiers totally unable to interpret the signs, who took risks of which no experienced trench dweller would ever have dreamed and hesitated timidly when the occasion barely demanded the quiver of an eyelid. However, they did some work, and their presence gave pleasure to the troops.

The enemy's heavy artillery was very active, principally against the front line. On 2nd April this shelling caused a great to-do, and "A" and "C" Companies were moved up to support the South Wales Borderers, but nothing happened. There were several points in O.G. One, north of Headquarters, that gave an excellent view over the opposing front lines; looking out from these, one realised how severely the forward trenches were being treated.

The time in support ended on Sunday 2nd April, and the 3rd Brigade became the divisional reserve. The Regiment was relieved after dark by the 2nd/60th and went back to Petit Sains, a hamlet about two miles south-west of Les Brébis on the Bethune-Arras road, where it remained till 8th April; from mid-February till early July, except for this stay at Petit Sains, the 28th was always within two miles of the front line. Captain Scott-Tucker took over command on the day of relief because the C.O. went to the Brigade during the absence on leave of the Brigadier. The weather was delightful, and the time was chiefly spent in working on the reserve trenches. When it was taken over by the Division the line was entirely unorganised; a medley of trenches existed, but there were no defined support or reserve positions. The plan for these had for some time engaged the attention of the Divisional Staff, and the reserve troops were employed on their construction; excellent progress was made by the 3rd

MAP 1

Brigade while it was in reserve. New lengths of trench were dug; existing ones were altered and made to conform to the general plan; the work was principally done at the southern end of the divisional front, north of the Béthune-Lens railway.

MAP 6 On 8th April the Regiment returned to the Maroc Sector. The line was taken over from the 10th Gloucestershire. It was held on the right by "B" Company and by "C" on the left. "A," in support, was in Middle Alley and Dugout Row; "D" was in cellars round Headquarters. Considerable hostile shelling was caused when the Tunnellers exploded a mine on the southern arm of the Crassier on the evening of the 9th; rather less occurred on the afternoon of the 11th, when a similar mine was let off on the northern arm. The latter effort blew away the whole of the front of the enemy's trench and allowed us to look in as far as the first traverse. On the 10th an intense bombardment of the German trenches by the 68th Brigade, which held the Calonne Sector just south of the 1st Divisional front, produced a certain amount of retaliation on our trenches. The weather continued to be lovely until the 11th, a day of heavy rain. On relief on this day the Regiment went into brigade support in the cellars of South Maroc, where the gooseberry bushes and battered shrubs of the cottage gardens were all shades of tender green. The weather here was wet and cold. Large working parties had to be provided nightly, their main task being to manipulate the masses of trenches round Middle Alley and to the north-east of it into a support line. The spell in South Maroc ended on the 14th, and in the evening the Maroc Sector was reoccupied, this time with "D" Company on the right, "A" on the left, "C" in support and "B" in reserve.

While the relief was in progress the Germans blew a small mine in their own wire at the foot of the southern arm of the Crassier. Later in the evening this was investigated. At first it was difficult to account for, but when the Tunnellers reported four of their men killed in the nearest mine, it became clear that the crater was the outward and visible sign of a camouflet directed against that mine. The Germans were quickly at work to repair their wire; for the next two nights the ingenuity of those in the neighbourhood of the Crassier had to be exercised to discourage the enemy from continuing his labours. First the Germans were driven to cover in their little crater amid the wire by rifle fire from the side of the Crassier, and then they were

bombed from the trench on the top, which overlooked the crater. Considerable skill in this respect was displayed by Lieutenant C. E. W. Lavender and No. 9798 Lance-Corporal H. Mann; the German working parties had an unpleasant time as long as they persisted in their efforts. The enemy tried retaliation from his trench on the Crassier, but the range was too long.

Unfortunately Lance-Corporal Mann was killed at dawn on the 16th, while sniping from the Crassier. Either less cautious than usual or opposed to an adversary more cunning than himself, he was shot through the head. He had enlisted shortly before the war and had done nearly two years in France. He was quite young, but large and strong, and was fascinated by all that happened in the line; his habit of leaving his company to take part in some interesting scrap in which he was in no way lawfully concerned nearly got him into trouble more than once. The unpleasantness of war was brought home to one by the loss of some such man as this: who, abounding in vitality and living vigorously both in and out of the trenches, having long defied the chances, found them at last too strong for him.

There was a lot of bomb fighting at night at the other end of the line, where our post in Sap J was within hand range of the apex of the Triangle. On 15th April the Crassier and the communication trenches, particularly Middle Alley, were heavily shelled all the morning by guns and trench mortars of various calibres. Our artillery reply was disappointingly feeble. Middle Alley was almost flattened in places; its passage from Headquarters to the line was an exhilarating proceeding. Everyone was at work all night to repair the damage, and by dawn the job had been satisfactorily done. Among the casualties in the morning was another good soldier, No. 9355 Private G. Yearsley. He was a signaller at the platoon headquarters on the Crassier and lost a leg during the bombardment; he died on the 19th. While serving with the 61st at Malta and Tientsin he had shown promise as a wing three-quarter. The weather had been fair, but on the 17th the Regiment withdrew into support in South Maroc—one company went to cellars in Maroc—in an unpleasant deluge. Wet weather continued during the time in support, and the men, labouring all night and every night at the reclamation of O.G. One and Union Street, between the Maroc-Loos road and South Street, were never dry. On the 20th the 3rd Brigade came out as divisional reserve, and the Regiment,

relieved by the 2nd Royal Sussex, went once more to the southern
MAP 1 area in Les Brébis. The weather, though wet to begin with, was
charming by the end of the spell in reserve. The billets were
shelled at midday on the 23rd; two men were killed, and two
MAP 6 were wounded. One platoon was detached in the Lens Road
Redoubt; the walk across country to visit the Redoubt was
pleasant, though to enjoy it properly some skill in shell dodging
was necessary.

MAP 1 At this period the Regiment fell into the ill-graces of the
Division. During the time spent in South Maroc the stretcher-
bearers occupied a cellar beneath a ruin on the main road.
One day a patrol of military police appeared at the billet—it
was contrary to all the rules of the game that they should pene-
trate so far into the battle area—and arrested the stretcher-
bearers for burning the woodwork of the house. The stretcher-
bearers averred that their fire was made with derelict wood
collected in the neighbourhood, and the police could not prove
otherwise; therefore the charge was dismissed. But now the
Division stepped in and fell upon the C.O. for not supporting
properly the representatives of law and order. He, confident in
the righteousness of his behaviour, tried to defend himself, and
the correspondence became a little heated. Finally, the Divisional
Commander, with his own pen, asserted that the C.O. was
unduly prolonging the war. The latter, horrified by the dreadful
accusation, retired at once from the unequal contest and was
immediately forgiven.

MAP 6 The next tour in the line began on 26th April, when the Loos
Sector, with the same frontage as before, was taken over. "B"
Company was on the right, "C" in the centre, "A" on the left,
and "D" in support in South Street. Captain Bosanquet, just
back from Brigade Headquarters, was in command during the
absence of the C.O. on leave. The Germans showed considerable
activity during this spell, though the Regiment was hardly
concerned with it. On the 27th an attack was made on the 16th
Division on the left, and on the 27th and 28th mines on Harrison's
Crater were blown, harmlessly as regards our trenches. Finally,
a considerable gas attack against the 16th Division took place
on the 29th; from this the Regiment experienced little incon-
venience, though gas masks had to be worn from 5 a.m. to 6
a.m. The front line was considerably damaged by shell fire.
In the evening the Regiment moved back to reserve in the

cellars in North Maroc. There had been nine casualties during the tour in the line, two of them killed by bombs thrown into our trench by an enemy patrol. Except for the provision of huge working parties little occurred in North Maroc, and on 2nd May the Loos Sector was reoccupied, though its frontage was curtailed; the left was now at Copse Lane instead of at Scrub Lane. "C" Company on the right and "D" on the left held the line, with "B" in support in Queen Street and "A" in South Street. Here the Germans made certain coy advances to the Regiment. They whistled pretty tunes to our men in the front line, fired over a friendly message in a trench mortar bomb and finally shouted loudly that they were Saxons; it was a popular trench belief that the Saxon was the least malignant of all the German nationalities. As they were known to be Bavarians, reputed the worst brand of enemy, the untruthfulness of the statement spoilt the scheme.

On 5th May the Regiment went into brigade support, but "B" and "A" Companies had to remain where they were owing to the numerical weakness of the 6th Welch, which took over the line. "D" Company went to the Enclosure and Headquarters and "C" to the usual place in O.G. One, north of the Maroc-Loos road. A lot of work was done while in support, and Headquarters was prettily shelled. On the 8th the Brigade went into divisional reserve, and the Regiment, relieved by the 2nd Royal Sussex, went to the southern area in Les Brébis. The relief began late; MAP 1 it was 1.30 a.m. next morning before all were in their billets. On the 8th also, Captain G. B. Bosanquet left the Regiment to become Brigade Major of the 64th Brigade in the 21st Division. He went out to France early in November 1914—he was probably the first Territorial Adjutant to get to the war—and took over the adjutancy of the 28th. He was wounded at Festubert in December 1914 and came back in March 1915, only to be hit once more on 9th May; he returned again in August. He fought and worked during the Loos battle with his usual energy and courage, for a wonder without getting hit. He was killed on 1st July, on the Fricourt-Contalmaison road near Fricourt MAP 7 Wood, at the head of the 64th Brigade. He spent the war going over the top in front of everyone else and getting riddled with bullets in the process; therefore it could not be expected that he would live to see the end of the war. The Regiment never suffered a greater loss than it did when he was killed.

MAP 1 The 28th spent a pleasant week at Les Brébis, in weather that was wet at first and fair later. There were heavy fatigues to be done at night, and the village was shelled daily, though nothing came near the Regiment. The billets were comfortable, and the men's baths in the main street near the railway bridge were excellent. On 13th May the 28th returned to the line, and the

MAP 6 Maroc sector was taken over from the 10th Gloucestershire. "C" Company held the line on the right, "A" on the left; "D" was in support in O.G. One, and "B" was in reserve in cellars about Headquarters. At this time the possibility of large stretches of our trenches being blown up by the enemy was causing much anxiety to the authorities; apparently the Tunnellers had detected hostile mining operations beneath our lines. The most suspected area was that opposite the Triangle and to the east of it. Actually nothing ever happened, but many precautions were taken. Among them was the provision from the support company of a "crater party" in Cordiale Avenue; its duty was to be ready at all times to occupy any crater that might suddenly appear in or in front of our line. The weather was glorious, and the trenches were dry and in better order than any since the previous summer. Except for some shelling of the Crassier and the continual harassment of Sap J by bombs, trench mortars and field guns, the line was peaceful enough, and life was by no means unpleasant. The May dawns were fresh and delightful; in the early hours the battered landscape often impressed one with its romance rather than with its gloom.

On the 17th the line was reorganised, and the Regiment extended its front as far as the Haymarket. For this purpose "B" Company was brought up from reserve to hold from Sap J to the left. Headquarters moved from its house in Maroc to the part of O.G. One north of Piccadilly that was usually occupied when in support.

The 6th Welch had become the Divisional Pioneer Battalion. This entailed the abolition of the "Garrison of Loos"—the 2nd Welch resigned that office to replace the 6th—and the consequent assumption by the brigade holding the Loos sub-sector of the responsibility for the defence of the village; the Maroc brigade had to help by taking on the Sap J–Haymarket bit of line. Everyone was sorry when the long association with the 6th Welch was broken, for the two battalions had worked well

together; the difficulties of trench relief had been reduced to a minimum. The 6th Welch was most ably commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel C. A. S. Carleton, who started his career in the ranks of the 61st and got a commission in the Welch in 1907. He was wounded early in 1914 with the 2nd Welch. He came out again as Adjutant of the 6th Welch and soon succeeded to the command. One could not have wished for a better man to work with. On 19th May, after six days in the line during which ten men were wounded, the Regiment, relieved by the 2nd Welch, became the left reserve battalion of the Maroc Sector. Headquarters was now in the cellar so often its abode when holding the line; "A" and "C" Companies were in cellars around it. "B" was in the old German front line, and "D" was in South Street. Six days were spent here, at first in lovely weather, but in rain towards the close. The German artillery was very vigorous, particularly in its attentions to Maroc; on Sunday, 21st May, the street and Fosse were slated by field guns for two and a half hours, while the area also got the benefit of about 300 ill-directed lachrymatory shells that were intended for neighbouring batteries.

This sojourn in support was sufficiently strenuous. Higher Authority apparently considered that to make the position in the line safe more trenches must be added to the existing maze. The Regiment was detailed to make these additions, principally a zigzagged trench—its main direction more or less parallel to and just west of the Haymarket—running from South Street to Queen Street. The companies were allotted tasks, and the trench was finished during the time in support, though this entailed the whole regiment working all and every night, beginning on the evening of relief from the line. This was a good performance on the part of the 28th, and the men worked with their usual energy and good will. Considering that for seven nights 200 or more men were continually digging, wiring and revetting, necessarily making a certain amount of noise, a great proportion of them above ground in close proximity to the front line, the operation met with surprisingly little interference from the enemy. There was hardly any shelling; the main trouble consisted of bursts of machine-gun fire. The casualties were 1 killed and 5 wounded. The job was finished early in the morning of 26th May, and the working parties went back to the northern area of Les Brébis, the Regiment having

been relieved the previous evening by the 1st Northamptonshire.

MAP 1 The billets were comfortable, though nothing like as good as those in the southern area; being very close to the local coalmine they were often shelled. Five-thirty a.m. was the favourite hour of the hostile guns; it was often difficult to decide whether to remain in bed upstairs or to descend to the cellar, where the inhabitants resided. Three men were killed and four were wounded on 1st June, when the billets were heavily shelled during the dinner hour. On two or three nights large working MAP 6 parties were employed at wiring the eastern side of Carfax Road. The Germans by no means approved of this, and the work was much interrupted by machine-gun fire.

On 30th May advantage was taken of a thick mist and the consequent lack of shelling to get in a little training, a rare occurrence in these days of incessant fatigues. Apart from this one misty day the weather was summerlike.

MAP 6 The Regiment returned to the line on 2nd June. In the meantime the Division had side-stepped to the south. The new part, the Calonne Sector, of which the 28th was to be the right trench battalion, began south-west of the village of Calonne, ran through the southerly part of it and continued north-east of it. The village, another model miners' place, freshly built though not so new as the Marocs, lay nearly due south of and rather under a mile distant from these townships; it was on the south side of the Béthune-Lens railway.

The 28th set off for the trenches, marching by platoons at intervals of 200 yards, at 2.30 p.m.; the relief of the 1st Cameron Highlanders was completed at 5.30 p.m. The route, at first, was that which led to the Maroc and Loos Sectors, but it diverged when the road met the Béthune-Lens railway, and turning right-handed, crossed the bridge over the line; then, swinging to the left, the platoons followed the Bully Grenay-Calonne road for a couple of hundred yards before entering the long communication trench, Calonne North, which took them to the village. This well-arranged collection of tidy little houses—its full title was Cité Calonne—had been erected for the workers of the mine, Siege No. 11, that lay to the east of it. The vast mine buildings, considerably battered and cavernous beneath their lofty roofs, were enclosed by a solid wall. From the mine enclosure a railway line on a high embankment ran west and then south through the village; around it were grouped

the houses of the original hamlet. Soon after leaving the mine enclosure the steep-sided embankment bridged the Grenay road and hid the newly built part of the village from observation from the south, thus making it a comfortable place to live in. The houses north of the embankment were more or less intact, though all the inhabitants had gone. Movement by day was little restricted.

It was soon apparent that the new sector was a queer place. On the right, though neither up to standard as regards condition and dugouts nor effective in layout, the trenches were more or less normal. Commencing at a Boyau called Bovril Alley the line ran at first through open country and then in front of the southern wall of the mine; here it was gay with poppies and cornflowers. Just before reaching the Grenay road the front and support trenches ended; they began again about 50 yards on the other side of it. As a result, the front line turned back towards Calonne along the west side of the road and when 150 yards from the embankment turned again eastward to continue through the foremost houses of the village. The ends of the broken trenches in front became, in effect, saps, which were confused and difficult to make head or tail of when they were visited; they were held by small groups of men, very much "in the air." The main trench wriggled in and out among the houses, whose richly furnished cellars made palatial dugouts, until it reached a slag dump—low, wide and flat—with which, on its western edge, the railway embankment merged. The trench crossed this dump, whose eastern side was the left boundary of the front held by the Regiment.

The mound was called the Burning Bing. For some unknown reason it was smouldering beneath the surface; a canteen of water placed anywhere on the floor of the trench would boil in a very few minutes provided that a shallow scrape were made to aid the process. The subterranean fires were in no way inconvenient, even at high summer time; as a winter residence the Bing would probably have been delightful. The German line opposite was among the foremost houses of a still unfinished model village, Cité des Cornailles. From one place in our trench one looked along a street, roadway and pathways made but no houses built, to see the hostile trench crossing it 200 yards away.

The line was held with three companies in front: "B" on the

right, "D" in the centre, "A" on the left. At Headquarters, in a house behind the embankment less than 300 yards from the front line, it was possible to live above ground owing to the cover of the high earth wall. "C" Company was in support in houses in the same street as Headquarters. Rifle fire was negligible in the sector, but the line, particularly the front of the centre company and the muddled saps beyond it, was frequently bombarded by a very virulent type of large trench mortar, supplemented by the fire of field guns. The indifferent trenches were badly damaged by the huge projectiles, and a number of casualties were caused in the forward posts. The weather was warm and dry, and in spite of the heavy labour necessary to improve the trenches the spell in the line was not unpleasant.

On 6th June the 28th was relieved by the 2nd Welch and went into support in the northerly part of the Cité. Headquarters, "C" and "D" Companies were in Headquarter Street, and "B," in support of the Welch, was in cellars in the southern part of the village; "A," in a trench named Horse Guards Avenue lying north-east of the village, was in support to the 1st South Wales Borderers, which held the left sub-sector. Very heavy fatigue parties had to be found each night to work for the Royal Engineers, but otherwise the time passed agreeably. There were even baths in this remarkable support area, not 600 yards from the line, and "C" and "D" Companies were able to use them.

On 10th June the Regiment returned to the line in place of the 2nd Welch. This time "B" Company was on the right, "C" in the centre, "A" on the left, "D" in support. The great trench mortars were again a dreadful nuisance. The forward saps, their principal target, were assailed with great accuracy, much to the detriment of their already battered parapets, and a number of casualties occurred among the garrison; on three occasions both members of a sentry group were killed by one of these monstrous bombs. Captain K. A. R. Smith, now in command of "C" Company, located the mortars in the enemy's support line opposite to him; on the 13th a combined bombardment by our guns and trench mortars had a certain amount of success in dealing with the trouble. Headquarters was shelled by 4.2-inch howitzers on both the 12th and 13th, without ill results; generally the turmoil in the line was considerable. The

weather was mostly fair, though on the 13th there was rain all day increasing to a deluge in the evening and lasting till the morning of the 14th; everyone was soaked, but the warmth of the night lessened the discomfort.

The 2nd Welch came up again on the 14th, and the 28th went back to brigade reserve in Bully Grenay. The billets occupied were the buildings on the road leading from the bridge over the railway to the northern end of Bully, together with a few houses in the village itself. The weather was fair, and the billets were comfortable. What would have been a pleasant interlude was marred by heavy fatigues; nightly 200 men went forward to make and wire support trenches and "T Heads" along the southern wall of the mine at Calonne. The work was hard and was much interfered with by the enemy, whose fire caused several casualties; the journeys to and fro were wearisome. The days were spent happily enough, and the drums played to the troops of an evening. While here the men's blankets were once more withdrawn for the summer, a retrograde proceeding. When visiting Calonne by day to view work done and to be done it was pleasant to sit in the sunshine behind a wall on the embankment and to enjoy a fine view over a large portion of the local front.

MAP 1

On 20th June the Regiment returned to the same trenches for a short tour; two companies of the 19th Royal Welch Fusiliers of the 40th Division were attached for instruction. The line was held with a Welch Fusilier company, supported by a platoon of "D" Company, on the right, "B" in the centre, "C" on the left. "A," which relieved "B" after twenty-four hours, "D" and the other Welch Fusilier company were in support. On the 21st the Welch Fusiliers were replaced by companies of the 12th South Wales Borderers.

MAP 6

The 40th was a bantam division; the men were stout-hearted and full of war, but taken in the mass were not capable of the same physical effort as those of an ordinary division. They were supposed to be small grown men, but it seemed that many were young growing boys, whose zeal had led them to join the only units open to people of small stature. It was necessary to build up the fire steps so that their sentries could see over the parapet. On the first night in the line the Regiment found a party from one of the R.E. Companies of the 40th Division at work there; it was in the charge of a youthful but extremely resourceful

corporal, fresh from Dulwich College, and worked with vigour and skill. The big trench mortars were as troublesome as ever; their fire caused several casualties and made the parapets still more untidy.

On the evening of the 22nd the Regiment was relieved by the 1st Black Watch and went back, in divisional reserve, to the church area in Les Brébis. Here it remained in summer weather interspersed with stormy days until the departure of the Division, early in July, for other fields. A lot of hard digging was done in the line around the Double Crassier, where the Tunnellers were busy, and on most nights large parties went there to work. A certain amount of elementary training was also done in the fields behind Brigade Headquarters, where the ground was more or less covered from view, particularly as our aeroplanes were busy knocking down the hostile observation balloons. A regimental boxing meeting was held on 27th and 28th June, and three sessions were necessary owing to the numerous entries; though generally unskilful, the fighting was fast and furious.

About this time General Holland left the Division in order to assist in the artillery plans for the Battle of the Somme. He was a first-rate commander and had handled the Division excellently for nearly a year. He was succeeded by Major-General E. P. Strickland, whom the 28th met for the first time when he inspected the regimental transport on the morning of 24th June. He retained his command till the end of the war; never was an officer more closely identified with his unit than was General Strickland with the 1st Division.

Towards the end of the stay in Les Brébis the Regiment was warned that the capture of the Double Crassier had been decided on and that it would be required to take part in the operation. Ground suitable for rehearsals of the attack—the best available was on the railway embankment, south of Les Brébis—having been reconnoitred, the preparatory training was about to begin. But early in July orders were received that the Division would shortly be relieved by the 40th Division. No one was displeased to avoid the Double Crassier enterprise, for at the end of June the 2nd Brigade had made a similar attack on the "Triangle," which lay north of the Crassier, and had failed completely. It is difficult to understand how anyone could hope for success in these attempts to drive a wedge, on a very narrow front, into a position so powerful and of such great depth as the

German line around the Double Crassier. Possibly the attacks were feints in connection with the great attack on the Somme; only as feints could they be justified. Anyway it was satisfactory to leave these messy little fights in other hands.

The Regiment was relieved by the 14th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders on 4th July and went by companies to the Bracquemont suburb of Noeux-les-Mines, where the battalion formed up and marched by way of Ruitz to Bruay. The way out of Noeux was difficult to find; consequently an extra halt, to spy out the land, had to be called by those responsible for the direction, in order to disguise the fact that they were more than a little lost. Heavy rain at the beginning of the march made the troops wet, but the last hour and a half was fine, which helped to dry them.

The departure from the part of the world in which the 28th had sojourned since it left the Ypres neighbourhood in December 1914 had now begun. For nineteen months the Regiment had moved up and down the line on a frontage bounded on the south by Calonne, on the north by Neuve Chapelle. During the last five of these nineteen months life around Les Brébis, though not without pleasant interludes, had been fairly arduous. Since the middle of February the casualties had been 41 killed and 96 wounded, while 16 officers and 496 men had been received as reinforcements.

In Bruay, a large mining town that had often been traversed but never before inhabited by the Regiment, the 28th occupied excellent billets in the Market Square and in and around the Rue Marmottan; there was a good recreation room for the men, and everyone settled down very comfortably. There was no doubt as to the ultimate destination of the Division, but it seemed reasonable to hope for a week or ten days in Bruay for training and route marching—nothing of either had been done since leaving Cauchy in February—before setting forth for the Somme battles. This expectation was encouraged when on the afternoon of 5th July the Brigadier took out his battalion commanders in pouring rain to discover and allot training areas; it was finally dispelled when late the same evening orders were received to entrain next day for the south.

On the 6th, leaving Bruay at 3.30 p.m., the Regiment marched by way of the west side of the Bois des Dames and Lapugnoy to the railway at Chocques; everyone was aboard the train by 7 p.m.

Sir Charles Monro, Commander of the First Army, rode with the Regiment on the way to Chocques. He was an old friend of the 28th, and with his usual kindness took this means of bidding it farewell. The first part of the journey was by Marles and the country round Cauchy; as the train moved through these well-remembered fields, most people felt a little sad to be leaving the area of which Béthune was the soldier's metropolis; for happy days had been spent here as well as difficult ones.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOMME, SUMMER 1916—ALBERT—CONTALMAISON— MILLENCOURT—HIGH WOOD

AFTER a four hours' journey by way of St. Pol the 28th reached Doullens at 11 p.m. The Railway Transport Officer here was particularly perverse and irritating. Like so many of his breed, he failed to realise, in his soft safe job, that he was the servant of the travelling soldiery and not their master. His methods resulted in a very slow detrainment. At the station the Commanding Officer was given a map and told to go to Vignacourt; he was not told to take any particular route. A friendly staff officer, entirely unconnected with the proceedings—he had probably never been over any of the possible roads outside a motor car—warned the 28th not to take the most direct road, that through Candas. Impressed by the seeming knowledge of the kindly stranger the C.O. decided to use the main Doullens—Amiens road. MAP 15
MAP 7

Owing to these delays it was nearly 1 a.m. on 7th July before the march started. Rain began soon after the departure from Doullens. The men were tired after a long day, and there was no apparent reason for haste; therefore at 3 a.m. the Regiment went into bivouac in a field a mile or two south of Beauval. It was a wet and cheerless resting-place. The soldier of the Great War, with his billets and his dugouts, was out of his class compared to the South African warrior when it came to bivouacking. On this occasion, moreover, the blanket, the main element of the bivouac, was lacking. Yet everyone contrived some means of shelter, and the repose was acceptable to the weary troops.

After a tolerable breakfast the march was resumed in dripping rain. The men had not marched for months, and their boots, hardened by the rain, made their feet sore. Most of them were sorry for themselves when they reached Vignacourt by way of Talmas and Flesselles. All were in their billets at 4.15 p.m. It had been intended that the Regiment should go on again that night; however, the hour of its arrival at Vignacourt was so

much later than had been expected by the higher commanders that the move was cancelled. Next morning the journey—to Rainneville via Flesselles and Villers Bocage—was continued. The day was hot, and the men, despite overnight attention in their billets, were footsore; the marching was not good. Rainneville was reached at 2 p.m.; here the remainder of the Brigade was found, and a halt was made until the evening. Altogether the passage of the 28th from Doullens to Rainneville was not one of its best efforts. Had the Commanding Officer, using the road through Candas, marched without halt to Vignacourt, it would probably have been to the advantage of all concerned; but he had to decide on his action without knowledge of the situation or of what would, in the immediate future, be required of his battalion. However, the Division and the Brigade were surprisingly tolerant of the whole performance, so all was well.

The march was continued at 9.30 p.m. The night was cool; on the scented summer evening the journey through the cornland with its ripening crops and scattered woods was entirely enjoyable; only the incessant gun flashes in the far distance reminded one of war. The road led through St. Gratien, Frechencourt and Behencourt to Franvillers; here all were bedded down by 2.30 a.m. on the 9th. The whole Brigade was in the village, a jolly place with cornfields right up to the houses and roses everywhere. A further march in the evening had been expected, but no orders to move were received; thus one more night was spent in safety and comfort.

The forward move began again at 3.30 p.m. on 10th July. The Regiment, having crossed the main Amiens–Albert road, travelled via Heilly, Buire and Dernancourt to Albert. The men got along excellently, their feet at last accustomed to the hardness of the *pave* roads. There was a lull in the battle at the moment, though the fighting never ceased; battered divisions were being relieved by fresh ones. The whole world was at Albert now. As one approached it the activity always to be found in the back areas of a big battle became increasingly evident; all the way from Dernacourt one passed acquaintances and friends at every turning. The 3rd Brigade relieved the reserve brigade of the 23rd Division. The Regiment was in its billets, between the church and the main Albert–Bapaume road, by 7.45 p.m. A few were quartered on the east side of the main road.

The billets were good. The house occupied by Headquarters,

in the street leading from the church to the main road, had behind it a pleasant garden, abundantly stocked with red-currant bushes, covered with ripe fruit. The town was frequently shelled, often with big stuff. On the evening of the 13th the enemy scored a direct hit on a house, in a by-lane towards the station, occupied by men of a field artillery battery and next door to one allotted to the Regiment; twelve gunners were killed as well as one man of the 28th. At 5.30 a.m. next morning Captain Smith was fortunate to encounter what must have been a delayed action fuse. He had a billet in the main road and was sleeping on a bed in one corner of an upstairs room; two of his subalterns were on the floor in their valises in the corner diagonally opposite to him. A shell came in through the wall above the subalterns, passed across the room and left through the wall above Captain Smith, close enough to him to destroy his breeches, which were hanging on the rail at the head of the bed; it burst outside the house. The room was so full of bricks, dust and plaster that further rest there was impossible. Another day, men of the Headquarter staff, sleeping in the afternoon sun in the garden, narrowly escaped demolition when a shell burst among them; luckily it did no damage. Much time was spent in the exploration of the battlefield round about Fricourt. The state of the enemy's trenches testified to the power of our bombardment; the abundance of our guns was amazing. The ground was still strewn everywhere with dead Germans and dead Britons, though they were being buried with all possible speed. The mighty mine crater before Fricourt, the largest yet seen, was an object of wonder. Apart from such explorations the wise man slept as much as possible in preparation for the toil that evidently impended. The weather was fair, but the dust in the town was dreadful.

Several changes had taken place among the Company Commanders of the 28th since October 1915. Captain Baxter still had "A" Company. Lieutenant R. M. Hart had taken over "B" from Major Wetherall, now second-in-command of the battalion. Captain Smith commanded "C" Company, and Captain A. M. Jones, who after much service in Africa had joined in the previous May, had "D."

It was late in the afternoon of 14th July when orders were received to take over the line that night near Contalmaison. MAP 8 The C.O. set off at once with the company commanders, leaving

the battalion to follow at dusk. The route was by Bécourt Wood, along a track to the Fricourt-Contalmaison road and thence to Contalmaison. The line lay just north of this village, along the road to Longueval, and continued westward of the junction of the latter with the road leading to Martinpuich. On either side of their point of union the roads had high banks, and this area was known as the "Cutting." "D" Company held the trenches on the right; "B" held the Cutting and its continuation westward. "A" and "C" were in support in lengths of trench among the ruins of the village, at the western edge of which Headquarters lodged in a cellar.

Contalmaison had been one of the small communities that abounded in this part of France, where there were no farms such as one found in the Béthune neighbourhood. The owners of a tract of cornland dwelt together in a little township, their crops growing right up to its edges; such places, two or three miles apart, were scattered over all the countryside. Each had its church; most had a chateau where, presumably, in earlier feudal times the landowner had lived; in modern days the chateau-dweller was probably the wealthiest farmer in the place. The village had almost disappeared. The site of the church was marked by a great white stone; all that remained of the chateau was its vast cellars, now used as a dressing station; the other houses, flimsily built, had vanished.

As soon as the relief had been completed—at 12.30 a.m. on the 15th—a tour of the position was undertaken, and day had broken before it was finished. The state of the forward trenches was fair considering their short existence, but the cover available for those in support was bad, and work for its improvement had to be begun at once. All that night and until the evening of the 15th the whole area was liberally shelled, largely with gas. Headquarters, an unpleasant place with a meagre top to its cellar, was a favourite mark of the enemy's guns; in spite of fatigue it was nearly impossible to sleep there—difficult even to breathe—owing to the quantity and the gaseous quality of the shells. The position had but recently been captured, and signs of heavy fighting—dead Germans, rifles and equipment—were everywhere. Fine specimens of field-glasses and such like were found in some of the dugouts in the Cutting. South of the village, on the road leading to Mametz Wood, was the cemetery. The principal grave was a large vault; without, the bones of

the proper inhabitants were scattered far and wide; within, lay two dead Germans. Near the cemetery was a fine deep dugout with a wonderful view over the ground covered by our advance. Close to the entrance lay a machine gun, with its crew of Germans dead around it and a group of dead Englishmen in front.

The morning of the 15th was spent in reconnaissance, for information as to the whereabouts of the enemy was vague; by the afternoon certain valuable facts had been established. A long sap called Pearl Alley, which ran forward from near the right of our line, was found to be unoccupied, and steps were taken to prevent the enemy getting hold of it. Similarly a house called Contalmaison Villa, nearly half a mile forward on the Martinpuich road, was found to be empty* and was occupied; a small copse called Pearl Wood was secured as well. But the enemy's exact position was not determined. The men, apart from the shelling, had a restful day, and the night, after the hostile guns had finished, was peaceful.

Next day, after a good night's sleep and a late breakfast, his mind permeated with the contented feeling that so often possessed one during the war at the end of a period of fatigue and considerable fear, the Commanding Officer was ill-pleased to be summoned at noon to Brigade Headquarters, a cellar south of the village. Such a summons was generally ominous of strenuous things to come, and this was no exception to the rule. The Germans still held the trenches north of Contalmaison between the Bazentin le Petit Wood and the Albert-Bapaume road. We occupied the southern part of the wood and for some days had been trying, unsuccessfully, to evict the enemy by means of bombing attacks from its edge. It was now decided that the 3rd Brigade should attack both frontally and from the flank. The plan disclosed by the Brigadier was that the 28th should assault on the right, the Royal Munster Fusiliers on the left, with the South Wales Borderers in reserve; meanwhile the 2nd Welch, already in the wood, was to continue the bombing attacks on the enemy's left flank, working towards the main attack. The affair was ordered for 10 p.m. that night, but at the instigation of the battalion commanders, who required more time for reconnaissance and preparation, the hour was postponed till midnight. The portion of the enemy's line allotted to the

* Contalmaison Villa had been captured a day or two earlier, but was not held by our side when the 28th took over.

Regiment extended from a point about 400 yards south-east of the Contalmaison-Martinpuich road to a point about 50 yards north-west of it and consisted of support and front-line trenches; the map co-ordinates were given, but they proved difficult to identify on the ground. However, Pearl Alley proved to be without price for reconnaissance purposes; from various points along it the enemy's position could be roughly located, apparently more or less parallel to a line drawn from the Villa to Pearl Wood.

It had been arranged that the artillery bombardment should be of the sudden variety. From 11.50 p.m. till midnight fire was to be intense on the front and support lines of the hostile trenches; from midnight until 12.5 a.m. it was to be concentrated on the support line; from 12.30 a.m. till 3.30 a.m. a standing barrage was to be put down 200 yards ahead of the support line. On these artillery arrangements the plan for the 28th's attack was based.

A signalling lamp was placed in Pearl Wood so that its light would be visible from Contalmaison Villa. "B" and "D" Companies were ordered to parade at 10.20 p.m. and to move along the road as far as the northern fence of the enclosure of the Villa, where they were to wheel to their right, and marching on the lamp in Pearl Wood, to continue till the rear of the column was clear of the enclosure. They were then to turn to the left and deploy into line. "A" and "C" Companies, parading at 10.30 p.m., were to move into position by the same route, "A" 100 yards in rear of the leading companies, "C" 100 yards in rear of "A." When all were deployed, the whole was to advance on a compass bearing for 150 yards. It was calculated that the leading companies would then be within 100 yards of the rear edge of our barrage. At midnight "B" and "D" Companies were to advance, carry both lines of trenches and halt 50 to 100 yards ahead of them. "A" Company was to stop when it reached the front line, to clear the dugouts and to start the work of consolidation. "C" was to do likewise in the support line. Two Lewis guns—the Lewis gunners were still specialists—were to go with each company. Four men in each platoon of "B," "D" and "A" Companies were to carry either a pick or a shovel, and the bombers of "A" ten bombs apiece; each man of "C" was to have ten bombs and either a pick or a shovel, and each officer two red flares to be lit when his unit reached its objective.

Everything was prepared in time though there was no time to spare; the Company Commanders visited Headquarters at 9.30 p.m. to report their readiness. The march and the deployment were done without a hitch; at 11.40 p.m. all were correctly in position and prepared to start. The only drawback was the weather, for heavy rain had begun at 4 p.m. and continued till noon next day. Everyone entered on the adventure light-heartedly and full of confidence—it is difficult to say why, because the affair had been hurriedly prepared, and there was no telling what horrid obstacles might be encountered—and their confidence was fully justified. When our bombardment started at 11.50 p.m. the leading troops were exactly in the proper place, just clear of the danger zone of the bursting shells. Directly our guns began, the enemy's protective barrage descended on the Longueval road, of which our rearmost troops were, of course, well clear.

At midnight the advance started. The night was as dark as it was possible for a night to be. Though the advance began in quick time according to orders, the speed soon accelerated, and there was some competition to be first over the enemy's line. The wire in front of the trenches was no obstacle to the advancing troops, and no real resistance was offered; a considerable number of the enemy made off as the attack reached its objective. "B" and "D" Companies halted as soon as they realised that they had cleared the trenches—it is surprising what a small obstacle a trench, seemingly wide and commodious when one is living in it, appears when it is jumped in the dark—and got into position. "A" and "C," in the front and support trenches respectively, set about their tasks, extracting a number of Germans from the dugouts in the process.

The leading companies were still reorganising when a crowd of dark figures appeared on their right flank. This proved to be the 2nd Welch from Bazentin Wood instead of the German counter-attack that for a moment it seemed. It was headed by Colonel Prichard; he was the real C.O. of the Welch and not an upstart captain, masquerading as a lieutenant-colonel, as were most of those who now commanded battalions. The quick recognition of each other by the two regiments avoided any fracas, and now the commencement of the standing barrage reminded each that it was time to get back to the captured trenches; for they were farther forward than they should have

been, and fragments of shell were already causing casualties. Meantime "A" Company had got touch on the left with the Munster Fusiliers, whose attack had also succeeded. Flares had been lit according to orders, and directly it was certain that the attack had succeeded Lieutenant Wynter-Morgan had been sent back, hell-for-leather, to inform the Brigade*. The work of consolidation went on all night in pouring rain, and by middle day the trenches were deep and in good order, facing the right way.

The enemy had undoubtedly gone easily; yet, though it is probable that but for the standing barrage the advance could have continued, resistance stiffened quickly, and patrols that went out at dawn were stopped at once by hostile fire. More than 150 dead Germans were found in the trenches, and as these belonged to more than one unit, it seems likely that a relief may have been in progress when our barrage began. Those of the enemy who went off in a hurry left everything behind them; the place was littered with rifles, greatcoats, head-gear and equipment; as it grew light nearly every man appeared in a German greatcoat, donned as a protection against the pouring rain. The casualties were 3 killed and 25 wounded, nearly all from our own barrage. The light cost of the operation is attributable to the arrival of the attackers close on the heels of the barrage; for the enemy, finding their adversaries upon them directly the guns had lifted, were unable to man their parapets and therefore took to their heels, such of them as could. Among the wounded was Second-Lieutenant G. Cryer, who was a sergeant when the war began and had already been wounded with the 61st; he got a commission soon after joining the 28th in February 1916. No. 22039 Private J. Grant, who was killed, had just returned to the Regiment after recovering from a wound received earlier in the year. He was a barber—from Norwood—by trade and the best hair cutter in the Regiment, as well as being a first-rate soldier. For this successful fight messages of appreciation were received from General Headquarters, Corps, Division and Brigade; they were deserved. Sir Douglas Haig came to Albert to congratulate the 3rd Brigade in person, but was prevented because it had not then come back from the line.

From the afternoon of 17th July until the relief by the 1st Northamptonshire on the evening of the 18th the line was

* This message was received by the Brigade at 12.38 a.m.

incessantly shelled with all sorts of stuff, including much gas. Three men were killed and 26 were wounded, numbers that would have been much larger but for the work devoted to the trenches. The Northamptonshire began to arrive at 10 p.m.; the Regiment went out to Scott's Redoubt led by guides provided by the 2nd Brigade, and everyone settled down to rest without delay. When he arrived, some time after midnight, the C.O. was greeted with the pleasant news that the 2nd Brigade wanted the redoubt for one of its reserve battalions and that unless he intervened successfully the 28th would be turned out to find another dwelling-place. This meant a visit to Brigade Headquarters, and it was nearly 4 a.m. before he got back, with leave, which had been difficultly gained, to keep the place till 9 a.m.

Scott's Redoubt, formerly a strong-point in the German front-line system, was reached by a trench running westward from Round Wood. It was a cluster of trenches containing many dilapidated shelters grouped round one palatial deep dugout, in which so many R.A.M.C. stretcher-bearers lived that it was of little use to the 28th. Another move, to bivouacs in Bécourt Wood, took place next morning. Early that morning the Pioneer Sergeant, No. 6016 Sergeant E. Murray, was killed, while cooking his breakfast, by the explosion of a bomb that was buried beneath his fire; he was a well-known character who had played for years as stand-off half in the regimental XV. Private Stephenson, his scrum half during the period, served throughout the war with the 28th and afterwards went to India with the 61st.

Owing to the fine weather bivouacking in Bécourt Wood was agreeable, but there was no peace there; on the evening of arrival large working parties had to be sent to the forward area; of these two men were killed and eleven wounded during the night. Next day the Regiment, relieved by a battalion of the Wiltshire, marched at 5 p.m. to comfortable billets at Albert, where the time passed pleasantly. The 5th Battalion was near by, and the chaplain, the Rev. G. F. Helm, visited the 28th. Here again the fatigues were a nuisance; on the night of arrival 50 men were employed at strengthening the wire in the front line, and 7 of them were wounded. Except for the visit of the eager sappers of the 40th Division at Calonne, and when, one night at Givenchy in January 1915, another party of sappers came up to put out concertina wire—at that time a novelty and not to be meddled

MAP 7

with by the infantry—one can recollect no instance of the 28th being helped with its trench duties by men of another unit; the conclusion is that there were regiments not too proud to demand outside assistance if the work in the line proved too strenuous for their liking.

Orders to move forward from Albert at 5 p.m. were received on the afternoon of 22nd July, and everyone had to bustle in order to be ready. The destination was the old German front line astride the road leading from Bécourt Wood to the Fricourt–Contalmaison road. The 1st and 2nd Brigades were to attack the German switch line that night; if the attack was successful they were to be relieved at once by the 3rd Brigade, hence the sudden change of residence of the 28th. However, the new place was quite a pleasant one in which to spend an idle evening and to enjoy a good night's sleep. The Headquarter dugout was close to the road, along which there was a constant stream of vehicles in both directions, and for an hour or more, to his own great satisfaction as well as to that of various onlookers, the regimental doctor controlled the traffic at the rather narrow bridge over the trench. The said doctor, Lieutenant F. C. Wickens, was a tough Australian, who had joined the 28th in the previous April and soon got used to the queer customs of the English. When he had done this he looked after the men well and was an acquisition to the battalion.

The attack by the other two brigades failed, and the Regiment was not required in the line that night; instead it was moved next afternoon to the old British support line. The new billet, on the edge of the well-known Sausage Valley, only half a mile from the old one, was devoid of shelter; still, thanks to the weather, no one suffered any great discomfort. Soon after arrival orders were received to take over the line next day. At 5.30 a.m. the 28th set off and relieved the 2nd Royal Sussex in the trenches that had been captured last time in. At first the South Wales Borderers was on the left, but that battalion being required for other work, the Regiment took over its trenches in addition to its own. Life here was as exciting as the most ardent fire-eater could desire. The Australians had just taken Pozières, and they held the trenches immediately on the left of the Regiment; beyond that, savage hand-to-hand fighting was going on for the possession of the continuation of the line up to the Albert–Bapaume road. The Australians fought vigorously. Particularly

admirable was their method of working along a hostile trench. There was no slavish adherence to the ordinary plan by which all the attackers remained inside it; instead, certain of them moved above ground, shooting down into the trench and thus obtaining a moral advantage as well as one of observation. These tactics taught an unforgettable lesson: that the rifle could still become the master of the bomb. The Australians proved to be very friendly people during this couple of hectic days; they were far more pleasant to meet in such conditions than in the more peaceful ones behind the line. The enemy did not take all this offensiveness on our part lying down. He repeatedly counter-attacked the Australians on the 25th; for hours at a time on the 24th and 25th his shelling of our trenches practically amounted to a standing barrage, very disagreeable to cross. Our Lewis guns, firing from a long sap towards the right of our line, took the counter-attacks against the Australians in enfilade and did great execution. The 2nd Welch relieved the 28th on the evening of the 25th, though their arrival had to be delayed until the bombardment had slackened. Even then everyone left the trenches hurriedly with his tail between his legs. The lodging for the night was once again at Scott's Redoubt. During the two days in the line the Regiment lost over fifty men. Among those killed were Second-Lieutenant R. M. Hart and No. 6681 Company Sergeant-Major F. Richings, both of "B" Company. The latter had just been promoted after long and useful work as transport sergeant. These two and No. 7612 Sergeant Minahan were killed while leaving the trenches. Sergeant Minahan, one of the three-quarters in the 61st XV that won the Army Rugby Cup in 1910, was employed by the Michelin Tyre Company when the war began. Although he was in London when mobilisation was ordered he was the first reservist to rejoin the Depot at Bristol. He had been wounded on 9th May, 1915 and was killed when he was on the point of getting a commission.

The Regiment only stayed in Scott's Redoubt for twenty-four hours; it was relieved on the evening of 26th July by the 12th Durham Light Infantry. The 1st Division was withdrawn west of Albert to rest for a while, and the 28th went back to Millencourt. The evening was perfect for marching—not too MAP 7 hot yet balmy and summerlike—and after Albert had been left behind the road led through pleasant fields of red-gold wheat.

The march was silent; probably every soul was gloating inwardly at the thought of a week, or two weeks, or even three, away from the line and away from bullets, shells and fatigues. Actually during the twenty days spent at Millencourt never a shell came near the place; it required a distinct effort of memory to recall one's previous experience of like conditions.

Training began, after a day of rest, on 27th July; with it came floods of instructions regarding the best method of attacking the enemy and the manner in which the war was to be conducted. Among these was a memorandum addressed by the 3rd Corps to its divisions, inspired by the successful attack recently done by the 3rd Brigade. About this time, too, High Authority—and consequently all authority down to the Division—was continually emphasising the importance of commanding officers keeping, physically, in the background and not taking risks. To some extent this policy was good, but it was overdone; a C.O., however valuable, was not irreplaceable. In the trench-to-trench attacks of the period the battalion commander could not influence the battle by remaining behind with reserves, for once an attack had failed it could never be rehabilitated as would have been possible in a more open type of warfare; now, even as in the battles of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the correct role of the C.O. was that of leader of the attack. Again, during ordinary trench warfare he had to be up and about always, completely versed in the exact situation on his front. For instance: often during the Somme battle, after the finish of a big attack, there remained ragged places the tidying up of which would make the line more orderly though their capture was not worth heavy losses, since the next successful major operation would take them in its stride. However, an Army or Corps Commander would order, from the map, these saps, or areas, or trenches to be occupied; sometimes, doubtless with a view to minimising losses, but nevertheless quite wrongly, by the time that the order reached the executive officer the strength of the force to be used would be laid down—a company, say, or a platoon. The operation might be reasonable; often it was not. A battalion commander who was thoroughly aware of the situation would in the latter case be able to represent that the result could only be failure; alternatively he might report that the assault was feasible if a larger force were used, for the employment of too few troops will never lessen casualties. And

nearly invariably his opinion would be accepted. But were he too much impressed with the necessity of living to fight another day, his knowledge of the conditions would probably be insufficient for any such expression of opinion.

Millencourt was a wattle-and-daub place if ever there was one; it hardly contained a decently built house. Its sour-tempered agricultural inhabitants lacked all the good qualities of the industrialists to whom the 28th was accustomed. Day after day of glorious weather made it possible to live almost entirely out of doors and thus to avoid the dirty interiors of the billets; the officers of Headquarters had their first indoor meal on 10th August, a wet day. Friends on neighbouring staffs were commendably anxious to provide means of transport to Amiens, where it was pleasant, after a meal at the Godbert—the best food in France, or so it seemed—to sit outside a café and wonder at the variety of the passers-by.

The training required of the battalion appeared to be a little over done, particularly the night work. As an example: after an ordinary morning's work on 7th August the Brigade paraded at 4 p.m. for the rehearsal of a night operation, and this lasted till 8 p.m. Soon after midnight the troops set out again to perform in the dark what they had rehearsed by daylight. The object of the exercise was to discover how long it took to get into position, how much noise was made and whether positions were taken up correctly. Having recently done an almost model real night attack, everyone felt a little aggrieved at being called upon to expend so much energy on this sham one; at the discussion afterwards, presided over by the Divisional Commander at 5.30 a.m. on the 8th, tempers were a little frayed. But the time spent at Millencourt was thoroughly enjoyable notwithstanding any minor troubles.

On 1st August—at five o'clock in the afternoon—the Corps Commander, General Pulteney, inspected the 3rd Brigade. On 2nd August brigade boxing took place in a natural amphitheatre outside the village; the boxing was not wonderfully good, but it amused over 2,000 men. On the 3rd a regimental horse show was held in the field on the Henencourt road in which the transport lay. On the 4th most of the men attended the divisional sports. At the brigade horse show on the 10th Captains Baxter and Morris were second and third respectively in the officers' jumping. Regimental novices' boxing took place on the 11th

and 13th, and regimental sports on the 11th and 12th. The number of entries for the latter was surprising, and the competition to be winning company was close and keen; in the end "D" Company won the shield—stored somewhere in England—with 57 points, followed by "C" with 52; "B" got 49 and "A" 41. The enthusiasm shown over these sports both by the performers and the spectators—for all the men were there—was pleasurable indeed because it proved their cheerful spirit. This cheerfulness and their endurance and utter good will were astonishing, particularly when their lot was compared with that of others who had preferred to remain in England to work restrainedly at profitable jobs. But the pleasure felt at the sight of their enjoyment was clouded on reflecting how many of them the Regiment must for certain lose when it went into the battle again, a return that could not be delayed much longer.

The expected move began on 15th August; the 28th paraded at 6.30 a.m. and marched to Railway Copse, where the 10th Royal Fusiliers of the 34th Division was relieved. The route led eastward towards Albert, at first through cornfields and then over rough open ground; turning southward it crossed the main Amiens–Albert road and zigzagged by various tracks south and east of Albert to the road from the latter place to Bécourt Wood; then, crossing the Fricourt–Contalmaison road, it descended into the long valley south of Mametz Wood. The copse no longer existed; it was represented by a maze of trenches dug in a rather pleasant green sward and lay on the northern slope of the valley, about half a mile from Fricourt. Here a peaceful night was spent notwithstanding the close presence of a number of vociferous sixty-pounder guns.

Next day at 11.30 a.m. the Regiment retraced its steps a little and bivouacked in Black Wood, less than a mile from Albert, on the south side of the Albert–Bécourt Wood road. Black Wood was a dirty orchard, but the bivouac might have been much more uncomfortable, and four quiet days were marred only by rain and a few shells. The men played cricket, though memory fails to recall how the necessary implements were obtained; a rugby match between the officers and sergeants was threatened, but the ground was too hard. To the south, bivouacs, transport lines, supply depots and dumps of stores were spread over the country as far as the eye could see, and the strains of other people's bands and drums were heard all day and the greater

part of the night. There was much activity in the air, and batches of German prisoners passed the bivouac daily on their way to Albert.

On 19th August orders were received to relieve the 1st Northamptonshire Regiment next day in the line north of Bazentin le Petit, three-quarters of a mile west of High Wood, that horrid obstacle to all our attempts at progress in the locality. In the afternoon the C.O. went up to look at the line. At the Headquarters of the Northamptonshire, in a quarry adjoining the village cemetery, he was informed that its commander was in the line; he went to the forward trench to find that Colonel Bethell was out in front of it. The information that the latter brought with him on his return was interesting. His patrols had discovered that the hostile trenches opposite were empty; he had occupied them at once and had reported the situation to higher authority. Provided that sufficient troops were got on the move at once it appeared that the ridge in front and even High Wood itself might easily fall into our hands, particularly if the operation could be supported by our troops on the eastern side of the wood. The C.O., greatly impressed, returned to Black Wood and made arrangements for an immediate move, expecting that all the reserve troops of the Corps would be employed at once. But nothing happened, and during the night the isolated party of Northamptonshires had of necessity to leave the enemy's trenches and to return to its own. One never heard why this great chance was missed. Immediate action was necessary, for it was evident that the enemy would come back at nightfall; possibly the time was too short for the machinery of the Corps concerned to be set in motion, for after nearly two years of trench warfare there remained few minds as alert as that of Colonel Bethell. He was a remarkable soldier; really a 7th Hussar, he had been with the Northamptonshire since June 1916. He finished the war in command of the 66th Division; at the same time, according to the Army List, he was half-way down the list of the captains of his regiment.

MAP 8

On 20th August the 28th set out at 1.30 p.m.—a platoon at a time—to take over the line. Having arrived at Mametz Wood, it was stopped, assembled under cover there and ordered to relieve the 2nd/60th in the sector on the right of that reconnoitred on the previous day. Whatever the reason for the sudden change of plan, it proved entirely inconvenient to the 28th, for the

sector was about the last in the world that one would voluntarily have taken over without a thorough reconnaissance. Still, it had to be done. There was no opportunity to get the hang of things; the dispositions of the 60th had to be adopted. The line was an odd place. It began on the right with a small redoubt; farther to the right, after a gap of 150 yards, was High Wood; our trench, produced beyond the redoubt, would have entered the wood in the part held by the enemy, who was thus on our flank as well as in front of us. The line crossed the Flers-Contalmaison road and ran slightly north of west. Towards the left a long sap ran out in a north-easterly direction; this was held by a platoon. There was also a detached post in front; though necessary, it was a beastly place. The whole was battered beyond belief. At first "A" Company held this forward system, but during the seven days that the Regiment was tenant of the sector the companies had to be changed about continually. The support line, a wreck of a trench occupied at first by "C" Company, began at the edge of the wood—inside the wood it became the front line of the unit on the right of the 28th—and faded away to nothing after running 200 yards westward. Headquarters was in a sunken lane called Mill Street, running northward from the Longueval-Contalmaison road, nearly opposite the turning to Bazentin le Grand; the cover consisted of tin-roofed shanties built into the sides of the lane. To reach the line from Mill Street, one went at first along reasonably good trenches, then by others that were trenches only in name. The reserve companies were in fair dugouts and shelters in the eastern end of Argyll Trench and the northern parts of Mill Street and Chester Street trenches. The enemy's line was somewhere on the ridge; the available maps did not show it, and our patrols could not find it.

Not until the 60th had departed was it possible to take stock of the situation, but it was plain, five minutes after arrival, that the German artillery would make the sojourn beside High Wood unpleasant; before the tour ended the Regiment had endured more concentrated shelling than in any similar period. The front line, the support line, Mill Street and the whole space between Headquarters and the forward trenches were plastered day and night with shells of all calibres up to 8-inch; the big shells outnumbered the small ones. Doubtless the enemy was having a far worse time than us—to see our guns, wheel to wheel,

blazing away day and night, filled one with awe—but this was no consolation when one was caught in barrage fire in the open, as happened continually to those who had to move about between the rear of the position and the front. It is remarkable that there was hardly a bullet amid this hail of shells; as far as small-arms fire was concerned it was quite safe to walk above ground to the front line. When the dispositions taken over had been examined it was evident that they must be altered as soon as there was enough light to make fresh ones. After the trenches had been explored, the forward post was visited. The ground in front of our lines was a mass of shell-holes, and more by luck than judgment the post was found; fortunately the loud conversation of the inmates advertised its whereabouts. A German who had been lying in a shell-hole for two days—shot through the legs—was encountered on the way and was promised succour, but on the return journey, in the darkness and amid the multitude of shell-holes, he was not lit upon again; nor did the reliefs and ration parties for the post ever find him.

The redistribution of the forward troops began at dawn. There had been over fifty casualties by midnight on the 20th, mostly among those in the left half of the support line and in the centre and left of the front line; the right was less severely shelled because it was close to the enemy's positions; the sap was the safest place in the line. Therefore two platoons of the support company were withdrawn to the reserve dugouts, and the remainder closed up towards the wood; additional men were put into the sap, and a portion of the garrison of the front line was moved into shell-holes a hundred yards forward. When the sector was handed over on 27th August the front line had been battered out of recognition, and the troops, except those in the sap and the redoubt, were all out in shell-holes.

The 21st was a lovely day—the weather, except for one wet day, was warm and summerlike throughout this spell in the trenches—and the bombardment continued unabatedly. Headquarters got more than its fair share; among those hit was No. 11627 Private F. Thomas, the Commanding Officer's servant, a man remarkable for his immaculate manners and calm disregard of every kind of danger. Orders arrived during the day that a trench was to be dug, parallel to the side of the wood, from the redoubt to the support line and thence to a trench called Leith Walk; the task was begun at nightfall and was

continued every evening. There were frequent interruptions because the men were digging less than a hundred yards from the enemy, and he disapproved of the work. While superintending the working parties on the 21st Major Wetherall was wounded for the second time in the war. He came back to Headquarters, where the shelter shared by the C.O., the Adjutant and himself was only large enough to allow two people to lie down properly. In the case of one of the other occupants the sympathy due to the wounded Second-in-Command was entirely quenched by the fear lest his own precious slumber should be disturbed. However, escorted by the Adjutant, Major Wetherall very considerably went straight away to the dressing station.

The number of dead—our own dead—here was greater than in any sector occupied before or afterwards. Men of every kind of regiment lay all about the place, half buried in the trenches and the parapets, lying in clusters between and in front of the trenches; they were particularly numerous around the redoubt. The 28th was careful to bury its own dead; it also succeeded in burying a good many of those left by other people.

The shelling continued incessantly day after day, frequently increasing to hurricane strength. The quietest time was always from 4.30 a.m. to 7 a.m., and between these hours the inter-company reliefs took place. The frequent readjustment of the dispositions gradually reduced the casualties; there were over 50 on the 21st, while on the succeeding days the numbers were 27, 25, 6, 13, 6 and 5. The increase on the 25th was due to the misfortunes of Headquarters. In the afternoon the guns that were shelling our heavy artillery positions at the head of Caterpillar Valley got a direct hit on the dugout of three regimental cyclist orderlies stationed near the battery positions, part of a "relay" to the Brigade and the transport. No. 9767 Private Mitchell was killed, and No. 2141 Private Richards, who lost a leg, died on the 26th; the other was unhurt. Private Mitchell had been an orderly at Headquarters since the first day of the war; despite the dangerous life he always led he had never been hit before; he was a real loss to the Regiment. Private Richards had enlisted at the beginning of the war; he was a cheerful youth with a broad smile for everything and everybody. Later the enemy got another hit on one of the shelters in Mill Street. Regimental Sergeant-Major Brain, his batman and Company Sergeant-Major Judd were wounded, and two men were killed. The loss

of the first of these—he was away for some months—broke up a remarkable coterie of Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers at Headquarters. Of these: Biddle, the signalling sergeant, and Regimental Quartermaster-Sergeant Hague have already been alluded to. The Regimental Sergeant-Major, solid and imperturbable, unostentatious to a degree uncommon among those of his rank, was entirely reliable and did magnificent work for the Regiment. Sergeant Brassington, the orderly room clerk,* never left the 28th for a day (except for leave) during the war. He was always up in the line with the Regiment, and when it went over the top he rejoined directly the objective was reached, with his portable typewriter in his hand. His knowledge and memory of men and events were remarkable. When the time came for him to go to the base as orderly room sergeant, he sought and obtained leave to stay where he was, instead of retiring to comfortable and well-earned security at Rouen. Armourer-Sergeant Grant, the fifth of the circle, identified himself entirely with the 28th. He spent his time in the front line, caring for the soldiers' weapons and with his own trying to lessen the number of the enemy in the trenches opposite.

On 27th August the relief of the Regiment by the 10th Scottish Rifles of the 15th Division began at 5 p.m., but it was 8.30 a.m. on the 28th before the last of "C" Company, which in the darkness was difficult to extricate from its shell-holes, were in their bivouac in Bécourt Wood. Colonel Usher, the commander of the Scottish Rifles, had, some years before the war, finished command of one of its regular battalions; directly the war began he rejoined to form, train and lead his present unit. He had been badly wounded at Loos, yet now, at the age of 56, was doing his job with the zest of a two-year-old.

MAP 7

These seven days—a long time to be in such a poisonous place—tested the staying power of everyone; at the end of the period one's knowledge of the stout-heartedness or otherwise of many people in the battalion had been vastly increased. The total casualties were 55 killed and 132 wounded. Many valuable men were killed, of whom the following were outstanding: No. 22087 Lance-Corporal Sudbury had enlisted in the cavalry soon after the war began. While serving with the Southern Cavalry Depot

* On reaching France an orderly room sergeant proceeded to the 3rd Echelon of General Headquarters at Rouen, there to compile, from the information supplied by his battalion, the necessary records. The orderly room work with the battalion was done by the clerk.

at Bristol he was, with many of his fellows, transferred to the Regiment. When he was about to get a commission, an opportunity occurred for him to join the 28th; at once he abandoned his chances of promotion and came out to France. He had been wounded at Loos. No. 6532 Sergeant Sibthorpe was a first-rate war non-commissioned officer though too light-hearted to become one in peace time. No. 8174 Corporal Hibberd, a vigorous and determined little man. No. 8442 Sergeant Smith, an excellent N.C.O., had played for the 61st at rugby football in Malta and in China.

The work of the Transport Officer, Captain T. R. A. Morris, was remarkable. Though life in the trenches was unpleasant, the nightly journeys up and down Caterpillar Valley between the transport lines and Headquarters were far worse; yet the services for which Captain Morris was responsible were always carried out perfectly.

The bivouac in Bécourt Wood was indifferent. There were a few tents, but most of the men were in un-watertight shelters. After a thunderstorm on the 29th the weather broke up; during that night and the whole of the next day rain poured down incessantly. An appeal to the Brigade resulted in a move to Albert at 3 p.m. on the 30th, and good billets near the main road were occupied. Albert was certainly shelled a good deal while Bécourt Wood was left alone by the enemy's guns, but in Albert the men could be kept dry and made reasonably comfortable.

By this time the average strength of the companies was only about 75, for few reinforcements had arrived to balance the steady drain of the Somme fighting. Captains Baxter, Smith and Jones still respectively commanded "A," "C" and "D" Companies; Lieutenant J. Peate had "B." Lieutenant M. A. Green had taken over the adjutancy from Major Scott-Tucker in the previous June, the latter having been appointed to the staff of a Corps. There was no second-in-command.

There were serving with the reserve battalions in England at this period a number of warrant and non-commissioned officers who had not yet been to the war. The senior officers of these battalions had to produce efficient reinforcements for the expeditionary armies in a shorter time than had been devoted before the war to the elementary training of the recruit. This was an enormously difficult task, and it was natural that they should try to keep their best instructors. Many of the latter

tried very hard to get to the war; others were not so eager. One should not blame too greatly those who hung back, particularly as there were young and perfectly able-bodied officers—an infinitesimal number of them, to be sure—who clung like limpets to the safe rock of the 3rd Battalion; it was much harder to keep an officer in England against his will than an N.C.O. For a long time efforts had been made to exchange for some of the N.C.Os. without war experience a number who for two years had experienced continual war. During the stay in Albert these efforts were in a minor degree successful. Among the few for whom an exchange was arranged, two—Biddle, the signalling sergeant, and No. 7611 Sergeant Griffin—protested successfully against leaving the Regiment. Sergeant Griffin, a stout-hearted man and one of the best three-quarters in the regimental XV, was killed in High Wood a few days later, so he did not live long after his correct decision.

The stay in Albert was enjoyable but short; on the morning of 2nd September the Regiment relieved the 1st Black Watch in the Quadrangle, a conglomeration of trenches near an extinct covert, a quarter of a mile west of the southern part of Mametz Wood. Here the companies were in fair trenches with the officers of Headquarters in a comfortable dugout to the south of them and just in front of a lot of noisy sixty-pounder guns. The weather was cold with a good deal of rain. On the morning of the 4th the Brigadier sent for the C.O. and Colonel Prichard of the 2nd Welch to tell them that the Brigade had been ordered to attack High Wood on 8th September and that their battalions were to be the assaulting ones. It was obvious that the wood could only be captured by an attack on a wide front; this, by occupying the ground on either side, would pinch it out.* To plunge relatively small forces into the wood on a narrow front was only to ask for trouble, and the operation was undertaken with extreme reluctance, after many unavailing protests. However there was no getting out of it; therefore when the Regiment had moved forward to positions near the wood, plans based on the orders of the Brigade were prepared, a preliminary visit to the scene of the attack having been made on the afternoon of 4th September.

MAP 8

On the afternoon of the 5th the Regiment relieved the Black

* This actually happened a week later when the big advance of September 15th took place.

Watch in the vicinity of Bazentin-le-Grand. Headquarters was in cellars in the village with "A" Company in a trench running northward of it; "B," "C" and "D" were in the southern portions of Thistle Alley, Chester Street and Mill Street respectively. Apart from the completion of the plan of attack, the two days previous to it were employed in making a hundred necessary arrangements, in finding observation places and in examining the ground from them, in observing how the guns were getting on with their preliminary shoots. The men were frequently on working parties. The period from the early evening of the 7th till as late as possible on the morning of the 8th was devoted to sleep in preparation for much probable fatigue in the near future.

When it was ready the plan was not alluring. According to the map the German line in the wood consisted of two trenches. The foremost ran from the south-east corner to a point about 200 yards south of the north-west corner; the other, only a little of which was inside the wood, was apparently the more important and was parallel to and 300 yards from the first. Two trenches, about 200 yards apart, ran northward from the front trench; the most easterly of these joined the second trench, and the other swung round to the west outside the wood and ended; apparently both had at one time been communication trenches. The 2nd Welch on the right was to attack northward from our line within the wood and to take the enemy's front trench and the portions of those running north from it, as far as the first ride in the wood. The 28th was to attack in an easterly direction from the trench—now called New Trench—that it had dug during the sojourn alongside the wood at the end of August and to capture the parts of the two northward running trenches that lay between the ride and the northern edge of the wood. Troops of the 15th Division were to take the northern end of the westernmost of these trenches and then to hand it over to the 28th. The frontage of the attack was very short; no advance was to be attempted on the right of the Welch or on the left of the 15th Division, and the latter would only be engaged on a front of 200 yards. One company of the South Wales Borderers was lent to the 28th to carry tools, and as soon as the Regiment had started, the remainder of that battalion was to replace it in New Trench and to be ready to move into High Wood in support, at the instance of its own commander. One company of the Royal

Munster Fusiliers was to hold the line on the right of the Welch; the remainder would constitute the reserve for the whole operation. From 12 noon till half an hour before the attack there was to be an artillery bombardment of the whole of the wood held by the enemy; for the remaining half-hour this was to be replaced by a heavy bombardment by trench mortars. Smoke and *flammenwerfer* were to be used as the assaulting troops went over.

Such was the scheme. It is difficult to understand what advantage could be gained by the operation, particularly when it is remembered that the big attack of 15th September, with its great element of surprise, must already have been planned; even were the sortie into the wood entirely successful, the possession of that little bit of territory could have no real effect on the coming tank attack, for unless the latter failed, it must result, in the course of its great sweep forward, in the capture of the whole wood.

To arrange the dispositions for the assault proved troublesome. In the part of New Trench opposite the objective there was barely room for the two companies that would form the leading lines. It would be necessary for the supporting companies either to form up in the open in rear of New Trench or to wait in the northern part of Leith Walk until the leading companies had gone over, and then, before following, to file into the positions they had vacated. The former alternative was refused by the authorities. It was probably risky; yet it seems fair to deduce from the enemy's entire failure to use small-arms fire against troops moving above ground near the wood that he kept an indifferent local look-out and therefore that with proper care the risk was reasonable, particularly as the other alternative must certainly result in a very dangerous delay in the advance of the supporting companies.

Although the attack was timed for 6 p.m. on 8th September, the Regiment had to begin its forward move at noon, because directly the enemy was aware that our artillery fire portended unusual occurrences he could be depended on to put down a barrage on the whole of the ground that the 28th had to cross to get into position. For the attack "B" Company was to be on the right of the leading line and "A" on the left; in the second line "D" was to be the right company and "C" the left.

The Regiment moved off with "A" Company leading and used High Alley and Black Watch Trench to get to the assembly

position. The preliminary artillery work on the 6th and 7th had not been impressive, and lack of thoroughness in the preparation was revealed as the troops approached New Trench. "A" Company got to its place without much trouble, but "B" suffered from the fire of our guns while still in Black Watch Trench; its progress had to be delayed till 1.35 p.m. At 2 p.m. the short shooting began again, and shrapnel intended to cut wire on the edge of the wood was bursting over New Trench. After frequent telephoning the range of the guns was lengthened, but not until 3.35 p.m. Among the casualties caused by these unfortunate efforts were Second-Lieutenant Peake and Company Sergeant-Major Hird. Both were killed. The Company Sergeant-Major, a good man, had served with the 28th in various ranks since the war began. The difficulties of assembly were increased by the extreme congestion of the trenches. However, after a very hectic afternoon, the troubles were more or less overcome, and the troops were arranged as well as possible before the time to go over arrived.

The advance began at 6 p.m. on a lovely autumn evening. "A" Company, though its left platoon was wiped out by enfilade machine-gun fire, attained its objective quickly and began to consolidate. Neither of the northward running trenches, designated in the orders and shown on the map, existed on the ground; if they had ever been there, they were now obliterated by shell fire. The progress of "B" Company was interrupted for a while by a number of Germans in a trench along the edge of the wood; the obstruction was soon overcome, and the Company joined "A" on the objective. As soon as "A" and "B" had started "C" and "D" began to move down to New Trench in order to advance. The trenches were much congested, and the commanders of the supporting companies, realising that they would never join the battle at the rate they were going, led their men into the open before reaching their allotted places. But by now the Germans had grasped the situation and speedily brought enfilade fire from the left to bear on the ground between the wood and our assembly trenches; by the time that the supporting companies had joined "A" and "B" they had suffered heavily. Part of them, moreover, became engaged with the enemy in his front-line trench within the wood, and this was not their job. Headquarters got in touch with the troops of the 15th Division on the left, but no men could be spared to take over the trench

that they had occupied. The work of consolidation went on under very difficult conditions. By now the enemy's guns were taking a hand in the fight, and they had the range of our position accurately; he had also moved up machine guns to enfilade us from the left—the wood had been so battered that it gave no cover—and casualties were incessant. No reinforcements were forthcoming, despite frequent messages demanding them. Finally, after dark, the remnant of the 28th was withdrawn to New Trench, where it remained until relieved. At 3 a.m. on the 9th the enemy attacked the left of our position and was driven back after a sharp fight, leaving in our hands 2 officers and 16 men. At 11 a.m. the Regiment, relieved by a company of the Munster Fusiliers, went back to the Quadrangle.

As far as could be judged from what happened during the battle, the Germans had few men in the wood. But they were certainly able to keep under machine-gun fire from the north the part into which the 28th penetrated. Soon after the objective had been reached—presumably as soon as the enemy was aware of our position—the whole area was alive with bullets; it was quickly strewn with our dead and wounded. The shelling, also, was severe. The operation was thoroughly unsatisfactory, for, apart from the difficulties at the start, the artillery support was never up to standard, and there was no infantry support at all. The 28th did its best, and the fact was appreciated. On 9th September, at the Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly, the C.O. got a letter from the Divisional Commander saying (among other things), "Your battalion did splendidly yesterday, and got their objectives. I sent the Corps Commander's congratulations to them this morning, and am writing to convey them to you with my own, not only for this occasion, but for all others when you've been engaged."

The casualties were heavy. Lieutenants J. A. P. Parnell, A. F. D. Brown and Peate were killed; Lieutenants J. E. S. Wakeley and E. A. Cockett died of wounds; Lieutenant-Colonel Pagan, Captains Smith, Jones and S. T. Cross, Lieutenants A. Birley, A. C. Sly, C. H. Steel and E. Duff were wounded; 84 N.C.Os. and men were killed and 122 wounded. Only Captain Baxter, Lieutenants Lavender, F. C. Davis and Green and 96 N.C.Os. and men were unhit. Lieutenant Wakeley had been with the 28th since June 1915; for over a year he had done really good work as intelligence officer. Lieutenant

Cockett had joined in March 1916; though wounded in August he had quickly escaped from hospital. Lieutenant Parnell, who had joined in October 1915, was a cheerful thruster. In addition to Sergeant-Major Hird many valuable N.C.Os. and men, who had done long and courageous service in the war, were lost. The tremendous hostile barrage maintained throughout the afternoon and late into the night on the ground between the wood and Bazentin Le Grand was responsible for some of the losses. For instance: No. 8015 Sergeant Gray, whose grandfather and uncle had been Quartermasters and his father Regimental Sergeant-Major of the 28th, was never seen again after being sent back wounded early in the attack; his body was found, after the war, between the wood and the village. Sergeant Gray was a gallant man who would have got a commission had he lived a little longer. No. 9635 Sergeant Daniels, another good young N.C.O., met an exactly similar fate. Captain Jones, already desperately wounded, lay out all night in this barrage; his stretcher-bearers were killed, and he was not found till daylight.

On arrival at the Quadrangle the Regiment found near at hand—bivouacked in the southern part of Mametz Wood—Colonel Bethell and his Northamptonshires. Colonel Bethell came across to visit the Regiment and doubtless found it slightly dispirited: later he sent it a barrel of beer. Beer was priceless in the existing conditions; only a great man could have obtained it, and a very noble one have parted with it; the kindness of the act—as well as the beer itself—must have gone far to cheer the remnant of the 28th.

MAP 7 On 11th September the 47th Division relieved the 1st. The Regiment marched by way of Bécourt Wood, Albert and Millencourt to a camp in Henencourt Wood. Next day it went farther back to billets in Franvillers, where it stayed till 16th September. Nothing much seems to have happened there except a little training. Drafts were received, but there is nothing in the War Diary regarding the strength of them. Captain Baxter was in command; he was given the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel on 9th September and retained it until 22nd October, when Captain Vinen joined and took over. At some time during the period—probably during an interval between Captains Baxter and Vinen—the 28th was commanded for a short while by Captain E. A. D. C. Chamier, then barely twenty years of age.

This officer had joined the Regiment—he belonged to the 3rd Lincolnshire—in January 1915; he remained with it, except when he was away wounded, till the end of the war, by which time he was far more of a Gloucester than a Lincoln. He did invaluable service all the time.

At 6.45 a.m. on 16th September the Regiment marched to the camp in Henencourt Wood and on the 18th to the bivouac in Black Wood. On the 19th it moved to Bazentin le Petit, where, since the attack on 15th September had pushed the enemy into the low ground north of Martinpuich and Flers, it was safe to live in shelters in the open, but on the 20th withdrew to the eastern side of Mametz Wood, there to remain till the 25th, when the bivouac in Black Wood was again occupied. While it was round about these woods a great deal of work was required of the Regiment; from the size of the working parties recorded in the War Diary large reinforcements must have been received, as well as eight second-lieutenants, but no officers of higher rank than this. Two good men, No. 6257 Sergeant Strong and No. 7498 Corporal Fortey, were killed while working in Cork Alley, a trench that cannot be identified. On the 28th a move was made to Millencourt and thence on the 29th to the Henencourt Wood Camp. The 1st Division was now in process of withdrawal to the 10th Corps area round Abbeville. At 6.30 a.m. on 3rd October the Regiment marched to the junction of the Albert–Amiens and Ribemont roads and in twenty French buses travelled via Amiens and Abbeville to Feuquieres, a village south of the Abbeville–Eu road, forty miles from Amiens, farther from the battle than it had been since the war began. And this, for the 28th, was the end of the first phase of the Somme Battle. Since its arrival at Albert on 14th July it had lost 546 officers and men.

MAP 15

MAP 7

MAP 15

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOMME, WINTER 1916—THE WOODS ROUND BAZENTIN— THE BUTTE DE WARLENCOURT

THE stay at Feuquieres must certainly have been valuable as a means of pulling the Regiment together after its recent disturbing experiences, but nothing can be gleaned from the War Diary—the only available source of information—as to the conditions of living there: whether the billets were good or bad; whether the inhabitants were amiable or otherwise; what the training ground was like. Neither baths nor clean clothes are mentioned; nevertheless they must have been of extreme importance, because in an old pocket book, amid a page of grouses for the Brigadier, appears a note, made at the beginning of September, that the men had no clean clothes since they left Les Brébis. But the diary does chronicle events. Training was done daily; several short route marches were carried out; at 4 p.m. on 23rd October Major-General Strickland inspected the Battalion. At Association football there was a league, each unit playing the others in turn. The 28th won it by beating the Munsters by a goal to nothing, the Machine Gun Company by a goal to nothing, the Welch by 3-0, the South Wales Borderers by 5-0, Brigade Headquarters by 3-0. At rugby the Munsters were beaten by 9-0, the Machine Gun Company by 37-0 and the South Wales Borderers by 9-7.

MAP 7 Towards the end of the month the Division began to move to the 3rd Corps Area, east of Amiens. On 31st October the 28th marched to the Eu-Abbeville road and returned by bus to the junction of the Amiens-Albert road with that to Ribemont. Disembarking here, it marched to camp at Baisieux and on 5th November went to billets in Millencourt till 9th November; at both places training was done. On the 10th the forward move continued; the Regiment went via Albert, La Boisselle and Contalmaison to a camp at the southern end of Mametz Wood, where the 1st South Wales Borderers was relieved. The march started at 11.30 a.m. and ended at 4 p.m.; a halt was made for dinner.

On 12th November Lieutenant-Colonel Pagan and Major Wetherall rejoined. The former assumed command; the latter was immediately spirited away by General Strickland to instruct at the Divisional School, of which he shortly took command; he was a loss, but there could be no hope of retaining an officer of his calibre as a company commander. Captain Baxter had been taken earlier in the month to instruct at the same school. Major Vinen was second-in-command, Lieutenant Green, Adjutant; the Company Commanders were: "A," Captain Chamier; "B," Captain Wynter-Morgan; "C," Captain Davis; "D," Captain Lavender. Six more Second-Lieutenants joined on the 13th.

In this part of the front there was no habitable house east of a line drawn north and south through Albert; moreover cellars were the exception to the rule, and those that had existed had proved too frail to last much longer than the houses above them. Therefore the support and reserve troops of the forward divisions lacked the comfortable billets they were used to. Huts were being erected with all possible speed, but none were ready yet; as in the case of the 28th, most people had to be content to live in tents, and these, rising like islands from the surrounding morass, were unsuitable dwelling-places for the time of year. The Division was in reserve; its units were employed at road making. Each morning the whole Regiment, parading at 5.30 a.m., worked from 6.30 a.m. till 11 a.m. and from noon till 3 p.m. Haversack rations were taken out, and the proper midday meal was eaten on return to camp. To begin with the weather was dry with bitter winds; soon incessant rain began and made the conditions really abominable. The provision of tent boards and two blankets a man was something to be thankful for, but when the troops came back wet to the waist—leather coats and waterproof sheets protected their upper parts to some extent—it was difficult to do much to get them dry. Luckily there was wood everywhere; a large fire kept burning day and night opposite the opening of each tent proved the most satisfactory precaution for their comfort. The rations were as good as ever, and the cooks were expert; the energy of the Transport Officer ensured that a fair supply of coffee-shop stores was fetched from the Field Force Canteens now arising in various places west and south of Albert. Everyone was always ravenously hungry, and there was little sickness. The Regiment was largely composed of new men,

and for most of them this was the first experience of war conditions; it was unfortunate for the 28th that the young entry had to be broken in so hardly. On the 19th the Regiment had a day off work, the first opportunity for an inspection to see how the new arrivals were shaping; they would have been all the better for less navvying and more soldiering. Though they soon learned, they had not yet grasped the way that things were done in the 28th. It always seemed so strange that those whose consciences forbade them to risk being killed in battle were not extracted from their prisons and other refuges and set to work at these road-making jobs, thus releasing for rest and training those of their combatant fellow citizens who were out of the line.

The main work of the 28th was on the road from Contalmaison to Longueval, where it formed the northern boundary of Mametz Wood and the southern boundary of Bazentin le Petit Wood. There was also work to be done on the plank roads in Mametz Wood and on the metalled ones on the south side of it. While the troops were at work there was ample time to explore the countryside, and it felt strange to wander at will in places where three months since everyone had gone so fearfully. Contalmaison was flatter than ever, but the deep machine-gun dugout was still there, as was the vault in the cemetery. The latter was now surrounded by British graves; in one of them was buried a man, who, had he not been killed in action, would have been shot by sentence of Court Martial. On one side of him was a man with a V.C., on the other a colonel of the Royal Army Medical Corps: an odd juxtaposition. Mametz Wood was full of gigantic dugouts, and rumour had it that these were inhabited by Australian deserters who emerged at night to forage; throughout the war many such fairy tales were told. A walk some way north of Bazentin le Petit disclosed a considerable area where none of the dead had been buried; they must have been there for two months or more. In High Wood it was interesting to study the terrain of the attack of 8th September and to try to work out how the enemy had used it in dealing with our effort. Great activity went on everywhere; a broad-gauge line up Caterpillar Valley was nearing completion as were two hutted camps between High Wood and Bazentin le Petit and another just south of the latter village. The place simply stank of guns; just beyond the road north of Mametz Wood a row of monsters standing almost wheel to wheel stretched for half a mile or more.

Altogether the neighbourhood was full of interesting sights, and the days were enjoyable; only after dark, shivering in a tent till it was time to go to bed, did one really appreciate the rigours of the climate. The enemy plopped over a few shells daily, but otherwise he left the place alone.

About now the 3rd Brigade suffered a loss that it took some time to get over; General Davies went away after having commanded it for a year and three-quarters. He was a good leader, alike in battle—On 9th May 1915, at Loos, on the Somme—in the line and during rest periods. In the line hardly a day passed that he was not round and about the trenches all the morning, however offensive the enemy might be. To his quality of leadership were added those of sympathy and justice; his value was appreciated by all who had served under him long enough to know him. His Irish terrier, Freddy, was famous in the Brigade. General Davies finished the war in command of the 11th Division.

On 21st November, the Division having taken over the line and the Brigade being in support, the Regiment moved forward to the most westerly of the two hutted camps between High Wood and Bazentin le Petit. The day was one of impenetrable fog; although the route had been most carefully examined in the morning, the way—by tracks south of Mametz Wood as far as Bazentin and then across country—was found in the afternoon only with the utmost difficulty. The transport got stuck in the mud and was not extricated till long after dark. The huts were a great improvement on the tents, though they were nothing to write home about when regarded as winter residences. They had canvas roofs, and a few had boarded floors. The first three days here were dry and cold; afterwards the rain poured down and proved that the canvas roofs were not watertight; their leakages made the unfloored huts indifferent sleeping places. From here it was convenient to explore the line that the Regiment would eventually take over; two journeys on fine days gave the impression that the conditions were reasonable for the time of year, but a third visit, in pelting rain, modified this view. Moreover the way up was difficult to find, and in wet weather the going was bad. However the hostile artillery fire was mild compared to what it had been from July to September, and the rifle fire was negligible.

During the stay in this hutment Lieutenant A. McC. Inglis

visited the 28th. He was on the West Coast when the war began; he came home a few months later, and after that no one seemed to know what had become of him. Suddenly he burst forth in a blaze of glory in the tank attack of 15th September. He got a D.S.O. for that and continued to do great service with the tanks till he was badly wounded in the advance of the Fourth Army from Villers Bretonneux on 8th August 1918. Since he was never fit to return to France, he was employed for a time as a Railway Transport Officer at Charing Cross Station; soon after going there he died of his wounds. His deeds in the war brought great credit to the Regiment.

The 3rd Brigade went into the line again on 27th November.

MAP 9 The trenches lay in the low ground about 1,200 yards west of Le Sars, a village on the main Albert-Bapaume road. Mud was abundant everywhere; apart from it the principal feature of the surrounding country was the Butte de Warlencourt, a great mound a hundred yards within the enemy's lines and twice that distance east of the main road. The Butte resembled the large artificial mound on the right side of the road from Marlborough to Beckhampton. The Regiment took over the left sector of the Brigade front from the 1st Northamptonshire; "B" and "C" Companies went into the front line; "A" and "D" were in support. The way up was long and wearisome. Leaving the hutment it went by the south-eastern side of High Wood, then down the long slope into the low ground, eventually reaching the road joining Flers to the Albert-Bapaume road; turning left and passing behind Turk Lane, a trench occupied by the support battalion, it continued along the road from Flers till it came to Pioneer Alley, the communication trench serving the left sector of the line. So far the going—much of it over what had once been metalled surfaces—had not been too bad, but directly the troops left the road, it became appalling. Pioneer Alley was impassable, and the surface above ground was little better. Owing to an error of judgment by the Commanding Officer—an error as hard to understand as it was to forgive on the part of one so experienced as he—the men had gone up to the line in gum-boots instead of boots and puttees. In addition to this, although every subordinate leader had been told to keep above ground until he reached the line, two or three platoons plunged into Pioneer Alley. These to a man were stuck in the mud before they had gone a hundred yards; they

were extricated during the night by those of the signallers, runners and servants at Headquarters who were not on duty; the rescues were effected by hauling them out of the trench from above, generally without their boots. The platoons that went forward above ground were soon in little better plight, for the line was almost as bad as Pioneer Alley. The trenches were knee deep in glutinous mud, without parapets, parados, boards or fire steps, and were not even continuous; in places there were quagmires, two or three hundred yards across, between platoons. In such conditions a gum-boot was about as useful as a dancing pump; before long many of the men in the forward companies had left their boots in the mud. Such men remained bootless for nearly twenty-four hours, for it was not till next evening that a supply—with the concomitant socks and puttees—could be got up to the line. The support companies went to Eaucourt l'Abbaye, the ruin of what had apparently been a vast building, on the south-east side of the Martinpuich-Le Barque road, about 300 yards from its junction with the road from Flers. The darkness here was intense, and much time was spent in getting the inexperienced troops to their proper places in its complicated trenches and cellars.

In consequence of all this blundering, the relief, completed at 4.30 a.m. on the 28th, was the worst that the 28th did during the war. Throughout, the Northamptonshire showed the utmost forbearance, greater by far than that of the Regiment, in April 1915, during an indifferent relief in which the two units were concerned, but the sufferers transposed.

Headquarters had an excellent dugout on the Flers road, just west of Pioneer Alley. During the tour the conditions in the front line tried its occupants to the utmost. The so-called trenches were in such evil condition that cooking there was impossible. Therefore the food had to be cooked at a makeshift kitchen at Headquarters. The rations came up nightly, on trucks pushed by fatigue parties from the reserve battalion, over a Decauville railway which started from the Contalmaison-Longueval road and ran down to a dump about 500 yards south of Eaucourt l'Abbaye. The support companies did their own cooking; they also carried the rations for those in the line to Headquarters. When ready, the meals, such as they were, were fetched by carrying parties from the line.

Shelling, except for three heavy barrages on the front line on

the 28th, was less severe than usual; but it was so promiscuous that it caused casualties out of proportion to its severity. The weather was indifferent. Though the hostile trenches were marked on the map, it was impossible to identify them on the ground; they were as indeterminate as our own. On 1st December two Prussian guardsmen walked into our front-line trench from behind. The journey round the line, owing to the gaps and irregularities, was sufficiently exciting.

Though the support companies relieved the forward ones on 29th November, many of the newcomers were beginning to suffer from their unaccustomed hardships, and no one regretted the relief by the 1st Cameron Highlanders on 1st December. The day was still and misty; in consequence the Camerons came up in daylight, and the 28th was settled in the eastern hutment at High Wood by 10.30 p.m. During the four days in the line the casualties were 25 in all. Among them was Captain P. Smith, the doctor, who was hit by a shell while standing just outside the Headquarter dugout. He had only joined the Regiment on 22nd November but had already proved his worth.

Captain Wynter-Morgan had gone to hospital on 27th November; his sickness developed into rheumatic fever, and he was never able to rejoin the 28th. While he was with it his work had been outstanding. He possessed both courage and ability; one could be sure that any job that was given to him would be done successfully. His promise as a company commander equalled his performance as a subaltern. Captain Mallet took over "B" Company.

The eastern camp was an improvement on the western. The huts, nearly all boarded by now, were comfortable; there was plenty of fuel, and the men had two blankets apiece. The weather had improved; two or three days of frost, which hardened the mud, covered the shell-holes with ice and decorated the telephone wires and the remains of the undergrowth in the wood with a filigree-like covering of rime, made the conditions far more pleasant. On 4th December, a glorious winter's day, it was enjoyable to walk down to inspect part of the old German line between Flers and Eaucourt, where two companies were shortly to be billeted. On the way back the Divisional Commander was encountered. He was always about the place these days; hardly a morning passed that he did not visit the headquarters of two or three battalions, either in the line or out of it.

Where things were below the mark he indicated the deficiencies forcibly; his strafes were of great value because the Division had hardly yet recovered from its experiences during the Somme battle; everyone was new, and probably no unit was up to its proper standard. Nevertheless, during these morale-raising excursions, General Strickland was as quick to appreciate good efforts as he was to condemn bad.

The enemy shelled the vicinity of the camps from time to time; after the midday meal on the 4th it was necessary during a rather heavy bombardment to move the men from their huts to the shelter trenches near by. The men were on fatigue most nights, generally pushing up rations to the troops in front. On 5th December the Regiment shifted its quarters once more. Headquarters, "C" and "D" Companies went to a comfortable hutment at Bazentin le Petit, "A" and "B" to the old German trench system running through Flers, Eaucourt l'Abbaye and Le Sars, which had been the enemy's reserve line before our tank attack on 15th September. The latter companies lived on both sides of the crossing of the Bazentin le Petit-Le Barque road and the trenches, and officers and men alike professed themselves entirely satisfied with the place, which on the preliminary visit on the 4th had been regarded with some suspicion; the secret of their contentment was never revealed. The journey to visit them—there and back—took four hours, and progress was nearly always interrupted by the enemy's guns, for he wasted a lot of ammunition on the untenanted slope; at night, when the place was alive with men doing all sorts of jobs, he hardly shot at all. On 8th December the companies were changed over. Most of those at Bazentin were on fatigue at night; the forward companies were employed at the improvement of their trenches. The weather was dry till the 8th, when rain began and went on, with hardly a break, till the 12th.

Everyone was horrified when orders arrived to return to the tents at Mametz Wood. The move took place on the 10th. The camp had been shifted to the western side of the wood; bad as it had been in its old position, it was now much worse. One stepped from one's tent boards into a slough that was literally ankle deep and often went up to the knees in shell-holes hidden by the liquid morass; the rain dripped down, the tents leaked, and no one was really happy. Heavy fatigues had to be provided, and since training was impossible owing to the ground,

these working parties were a blessing, because they kept the men exercised. On 14th December the Regiment went into the line again, to the sector on the right of that occupied before. "A" and "B" Companies held the line. Headquarters was in an enormous dugout in Turk Lane, just north of the crossing of the road from Flers and that from Bazentin le Petit to Le Barque; it was a long wide gallery twenty feet below the ground, equipped with wire beds, and opening off it were several small rooms. "C" and "D" Companies were around Headquarters. The forward trenches were as muddled and as thick with mud as those in the sector on the left. The communication trenches, Turk Lane and Yarra Avenue, were impassable, but even in daylight it was comparatively safe to go above ground to the line. The Germans were probably too unhappy to bother about the few solitary figures that moved painfully over the mud flats.

For some forgotten reason our guns shelled the hostile trenches very heavily soon after the 28th had taken over; the enemy's prompt and vigorous reply was spread over the ground between Headquarters and the trenches; therefore the forward companies were not visited that night. When a thorough examination had been made next morning, and the dispositions compared with those shown on the map, it was evident that on the right the foremost troops were considerably in rear of where they should have been. A protuberance called Yarra Bend and another to the left of it had not been occupied. The error was probably due to some previous tenant of the line becoming confused by the medley of broken-down trenches. These salients were obviously important, but they were also extremely difficult to locate in the dark. However on the 17th a providentially thick mist, which lasted from dawn till after mid-day, enabled the places to be thoroughly explored and small posts to be established to hold them. In the evening proper garrisons were sent out by routes marked during daylight. Though the work was interesting, the mud caused extreme fatigue, and most of those concerned were glad when the job was done. No. 9380 Sergeant Read did notably good work. Throughout the correction of the line he probably never slept at all; in addition to courage and stamina he displayed an excellent knowledge of ground. After the garrisons had been established—all alone out in the blue—his example inspired certain fainter hearts than his own. Sergeant Read had joined

the 61st soon after it went to Malta in 1910; he was still serving at the Regimental Depot in 1934.

Rain and snow increased the discomforts of this spell in the line, and there were a lot of tired people about when the South Wales Borderers relieved the 28th on 18th December, a quick relief, which was completed by 9.15 p.m. The Regiment went back to the Bazentin hutment. The men had baths next day, for the amenities were improving steadily. For three days there was a hard frost, but then the weather broke again. Nothing much happened except work to improve the camp and the usual large fatigues. On the 22nd the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers was relieved in the support positions, the relief being over by 7.45 p.m.

The companies were in the triangle formed by Yarra Avenue, Sunken Road Trench and Turk Lane. The trenches were equipped with fair shelters, duck boards and revetments, and though not wonderfully comfortable, were certainly the best in the neighbourhood. Headquarters was in the tremendous dugout that had been occupied when last in the line; this time it was shared with the 2nd Welch, which held the right sector. It was interesting to listen to the Welch signallers yarning with the Gloucestershire men, for a signaller who had served since August 1914 could tell of strange events. The variety of coughs that echoed down the gallery was remarkable. From the trench outside there was an excellent view of the ground within the enemy's lines, rising away to the north-west on the other side of the Albert-Bapaume road. With glasses and a map one could identify the various villages and woods—doubtless inhabited by resting German troops—that were spread about the slope. The shelling here was more severe than usual, and several casualties occurred; among those killed was No. 2216 Corporal A. E. Berry, a young Non-Commissioned Officer who had done excellent service in the line for almost two years.

Just behind the front line, near Yarra Bend, the ground fell away abruptly; the spot was called Yarra Bank. In order to strengthen the undoubted weakness that existed at this point, Higher Authority had decided that a trench should be dug about 50 yards behind the bank. As a Christmas treat the 28th was ordered to do the work on the night of 24th December. It was to be a good trench, at least four and a half feet deep, with solid traverses and proper fire steps. The numerical weakness of the

battalion entailed every man being employed at the work. There was hope that the enemy would behave kindly, for though the two officers who went to mark out the trench just before dark on the 23rd were annoyed by flurries of five-nines, a further visit to the place on the afternoon of the 24th was not interfered with. The Regiment set off in the evening; the journey to the site of its labours and the distribution of the companies to their work took much time, being hampered by the pitch black night, pelting rain and a tearing gale. Work was started by 11 p.m., and at the end of five hours the trench was completed. Since the wind and rain never stopped, the return journey was as sticky as the outward one, but everyone was back in his place by 5 a.m. on Christmas morning, pretty well soaked through. The officers and men of Headquarters soon got dry in their hot and airless tunnel; the companies, returning to wet trenches, were not so fortunate. A visit to the new trench by daylight showed that it was a creditable bit of work. The authorities proposed that it should be called Gloucester Trench; however there were trenches scattered over half France that had been named after the 28th in recognition of good solid digging, so the compliment was not so gratifying as it might have been eighteen months earlier.

The rest of Christmas Day was spent in peace, and on the evening of the 26th the Regiment went back to High Wood Camp West, as it was now officially called. The night cleared after midnight, and German aeroplanes dropped bombs about the place; beyond breaking a few windows they got no hits, and everyone was too sleepy to worry about them. As far as memory serves, this was, for the 28th, the first example of the bombing of camps and billets. While here the welcome news arrived that the Division was shortly to be relieved by the 50th Division, so the cry was for training and reinforcements. There were four good company commanders and a number of experienced senior N.C.Os.; after a certain amount of weeding out the remaining young officers were showing great promise. To set the Regiment on its legs again, reasonable comfort of living, good training ground, freedom from navvying and more men were all that was required.

MAP 7 On the 28th a visit was paid to Bécourt Camp, which was to be occupied next day. It was agreeable to get on a horse and ride away from the mud and gloom towards comparative

civilisation. The camp was built on the well-known ground immediately east of Bécourt Wood. It was a huge well-drained site with metalled roads; the huts were well built and watertight. The prospect of comfort for the troops was excellent, but the training prospects were by no means so good. The ground outside the camp was as sticky as the line, and word was received of big daily fatigues and of a detachment of 100 men to work at the ammunition rail-head at the neighbouring village of Méaulte. The prospectors were back at High Wood again by 2 p.m., and there was a great scurry round to persuade the masters for whom the various fatigue parties were working—some of them till quite late into the night—to release as many men as possible to prepare for the morrow's march.

The Regiment paraded at 9.30 a.m. on the 29th and reached its quarters in "D" area of Bécourt Camp soon after 11 a.m. The march—by the road north of Mametz Wood, then through Contalmaison and on by the usual road to Bécourt—was wet, and the roads were muddy; as the head of the column approached Contalmaison it was bespattered by a galloping major and his orderly, who were only just seized upon in time to save the rest of the battalion.

The camp was comfortable, and there was ample room for everyone. Its Town Major was John Coates, the celebrated singer. Though determined to do things his own way in his domain he was a most obliging and friendly man; he did everything he could for the comfort of the men. The Brigadier—General G. S. G. Crauford of the Gordon Highlanders, who had succeeded General Davies—desired that a proper officers' mess should be formed while the Regiment was at Bécourt; it was an excellent institution. There was a sergeants' mess; and the kind Town Major provided a hut as a coffee shop, stores for which were easily attainable at Corbie and other places. On the 30th "D" Company, made up to a strength of 100, marched to Méaulte. They were lodged in tents at the southern end of the village, which was inhabited. They were happy there; for civilians, estaminets and suchlike, which they had not seen for three months, made them feel that they were back in the world again. At Bécourt, 31st December was spent in cleaning up and making things comfortable. A reinforcement of 175 men, which had arrived the day before, was inspected at 8.45 a.m. Nearly all had served till now in the Royal Engineers or the

Army Service Corps; they were good men and apparently glad to join the Regiment, but they had little training as infantrymen. In the evening the Scottish staff—for the Brigade Major was as Highland as the Brigadier—inspired their Welch, Irish and English regiments with some of their own enthusiasm for the New Year. And so, for the 28th, the year 1916 ended, though the war appeared endless; still, by now a trench existence seemed to be the natural one, and there were no regrets.

CHAPTER IX

THE SOMME, SPRING 1917—BECOURT CAMP—CONTAY—
TRENCHES AT BARLEUX—CHUIGNES—PERONNE—ECLUSIER—
WARFUSEE

THE civilised conditions at Bécourt were agreeable to everybody. Though the wind blew coldly through their floors, the huts were equipped with excellent stoves, and fuel was plentiful. The men got baths and clean clothes twice, not an excessive number considering the length of their stay in the place. The camp was never bombed, possibly owing to the Town Major's energetic supervision of the use of the blinds provided in the huts, and only once did shells come within hearing range of it. The weather was wet till near the middle of the month, when the rain turned to snow. By the 15th the great frost, which was to last so long, had set in; it improved the state of the surrounding country by drying up the mud, but bitter winds made the cold really severe. The Méaulte detachment was always happy when it was visited; it came back on 3rd January.

Christmas dinners were eaten on the 4th. The friends of the 28th in England had made an even more magnificent effort than that of the year before and had sent out masses of good things. They also provided a considerable sum of money with which many turkeys and much beer had been bought. The men dined in relays—only 300 plates were obtainable—and enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Much could be written about the generosity of those at home who cared so well for the Regiment; they were already finding it difficult to get necessary articles of food for themselves, to say nothing of the minor luxuries, yet the Christmas supplies and the continual parcels throughout the year never diminished. These kindly benefactors, condemned by age or sex to remain in England, there to suffer ceaseless anxiety, really had a worse time than their sons, brothers and husbands in France. The latter certainly endured considerable discomfort and, from time to time, short periods of acute fear, but, sustained by the presence of a host of

good comrades, they had a perfectly straightforward job; they were rid of all the futilities and worries of life.

Training, the principal need of the Regiment, was only moderately successful; it was hard to get the men, and the ground available—a few patches of grass in Bécourt Wood—was only suitable for the most elementary work. However, elementary work was certainly necessary. During the time spent at Bécourt seven days were devoted entirely to training, five entirely to fatigues, while on seven days part of the men were on fatigue and part at training. It was possible to keep the specialists more or less off working parties, so these made some progress, particularly the signallers, who were nearly all new men, young and very keen. Sergeant Biddle was now a Company Sergeant-Major and had been succeeded by No. 9636 Sergeant Coles, only a youngster as far as age and service went but a veteran in war. On days when the roads were the only places fit to set foot on, route marches took the place of other work, and in the course of one of these the Regiment penetrated the back area territory of the Australians; its inhabitants were neither tidy nor polite, and only three out of hundreds saluted the 28th as it passed them. It is difficult to understand why such magnificent fighters always tried to appear ill-mannered.

A number of officers joined in January. Captain Smith came back on the 6th, and, in all, eleven second-lieutenants reinforced the Regiment during the month. Most of them were very young. But the youngest, Second-Lieutenant G. N. Gosling, had joined in the previous November when he was well under eighteen years of age. In spite of his youth he was an outstanding officer, solid and determined; no one enjoyed the war more than he did. When it was over he went to North Russia, where he was posted to a battalion led by British officers and otherwise composed of Russians reputedly hostile to those against whom we were fighting. They were certainly hostile to us, and the foolish experiment was brought to a close by their murdering most of their officers, including Lieutenant Gosling.

On 23rd January the 3rd Brigade moved farther back for real training, and the Regiment went through Albert and then by way of Baisieux and Vadencourt to Contay. The day was excellent for marching despite the piercing gale, and everyone did the eleven miles comfortably, notwithstanding the heavy loads that the men were carrying. Between Bécourt and Albert

German aeroplanes were buzzing about overhead but took no interest in the 28th. Contay, like most of the villages in the locality, consisted almost entirely of farm-houses, in the draughty barns of which the troops were billeted. There were 20 degrees of frost on the night of arrival and 38 degrees three nights later, and the wind made one feel as if one had no clothes on. In this icy weather the barns were cold places, but the men were better off than some in the Brigade whose lodgings were tents. To keep the barns warm it was necessary to buy trees, cut them down and with the wood augment the official supply of fuel. The village was a rickety place, sparsely inhabited by old people, better tempered folk than were to be found in most of the local villages. The ground was excellent for training, mostly plough, but as hard as iron and unlimited in extent, undulating with small woods. The training attempted was rather advanced considering the slight skill of the troops in manœuvre; nevertheless it was good for them to move about in larger formations than they were accustomed to. After a little company training the battalion attack was practised on several days; on the last day the Regiment acted as enemy in a brigade battle on the snow-clad slopes north of the village. The time spent at Contay did a lot to pull the Regiment together, and the freedom of movement, uncramped by mud or other boundaries, the feeling that they were soldiers again and no longer navvies, had the best effect on everyone. The 28th began to approach its proper standard for the first time since it had been wrecked on the Somme in the previous September; early in the summer it had fully attained that standard. By that time the new hands, officers and men alike, were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Regiment; the old ones were cheered by the realisation that the battalion was once more what it ought to be.

It was now nearly time for the Division to return to the line, and on 29th January the Commanding Officer accompanied the Brigadier and Brigade Major to the territory about to be occupied. The new bit of line lay south-west of Peronne; the part that concerned the 28th was immediately west of the village of Barleux. It was held by the French and was in fine condition—partly owing to the frost—with excellent communication trenches and plenty of good dugouts. Only fifty or sixty German shells were encountered all day, which seemed a good omen.

The terrific winds and frost continued till the end of the

stay at Contay. Bread became so hard that knives were often broken in cutting it; soda-water froze into a solid block of ice directly the cork of its bottle was drawn. A lot of snow fell on 30th and 31st January and 1st February. On the 31st a brigade inter-company cross-country race took place, in which the Regiment did no good; it was a walk-over for the Munsters who—from memory—had their five teams in the first six. Major Vinen came back on 1st February. He had been ordered home before Christmas to a command in West Africa but persuaded the authorities in England to let him return to France. He stayed with the 28th till the middle of March, when he was appointed to command the 3rd Corps school at Foucaucourt. Here he remained till the Germans took the place over during the great retreat of March 1918. He then got command of the 5th Border Regiment and finished the war with it. He did long and good service in the war.

The move southward began on 2nd February. The 28th marched to Morcourt on the Somme. The journey lasted from 8.30 a.m. till 3.15 p.m. The way went through Baisieux, across the Albert-Amiens road, through Mericourt l'Abbé, Sailly le Sec and Sailly Laurette, across the Somme and through Cerisy. The day was fine, and the marching was excellent; the distance was a good fifteen miles. Both the Somme and the Ancre were completely frozen over; the ice was several inches thick. The men's billets at Morcourt were much warmer than the barns at Contay; those of the officers—Headquarter Mess at any rate—were cold and draughty. During the stay here, which lasted till 5th February, the chief diversion was the study of the French way of preserving the feet from the effect of mud and water. This was about to be adopted in our army instead of the uncleanly and unsatisfactory method—smearing them with a disgusting oil—that had hitherto been practised. Lectures were given about the process; demonstrations of the proper way to do it were made; finally all the feet of the battalion were treated. It was called "Foot Drill"; the precise details are forgotten, but a white powder certainly came into it; it proved more successful than its predecessor and was very much pleasanter to do. A further visit to the line on 4th February revealed an increase in the German shelling; it is extraordinary how this always happened whenever we took over a sector from the French. But in their frozen state the trenches were better

than anything the 28th had met since the summer of 1915; they were exactly what was wanted to teach the newcomers the intricacies of trench life, for the horrible ditches in front of the Butte de Warlencourt had taught them nothing except what it was like to feel really unhappy.

On the 5th the Regiment went via Mericourt sur Somme and Froissy to Bois Olympe, south of Cappy; the distance was about seven miles. Here one night was spent; the men were in enormous huts in the wood, and the officers, who were hospitably received by French Artillery officers already living there, were in dugouts in the side of the road leading to Cappy.

The trenches about to be occupied lay west of Barleux, a village about three miles south-west of Peronne; as right battalion of the left brigade the Regiment was to take over those just to the north of the village. The way to the line from Bois Olympe ran through Cappy and Herbecourt to Flaucourt. On the western outskirts of the latter village a communication trench, Boyau de Boulogne, over a mile long, was entered; it MAP 10 led to the Tranchée de Crouzas, the rearmost trench of the system. Turning left along Crouzas and proceeding for about half a mile one reached the first of the three Boyaux—Meudon, Flirey and Nord—that led to the forward part of the system. The front line consisted of two trenches from 100 to 150 yards apart, joined at varying intervals by short communication trenches, equipped with sufficient deep dugouts to hold everybody comfortably, and, in its frozen state, in excellent condition. The front line was held with two companies; the support company was in Crouzas where the dugouts were plentiful and good; the reserve company occupied Meudon Quarry, just north of Crouzas at its northern end. Headquarters was in a comfortable group of dugouts in Crouzas. Communication and fire trenches alike were deep and well boarded; in fact the whole area had a well-to-do appearance.

The 28th left Olympe at 4.30 p.m. on 6th February and by 10 p.m. had completed the relief of the 2nd Battalion of the 126th Regiment of Infantry belonging to the 24th French Division. Although the relief was over in such good time the notable hospitality of the officers of the French Headquarters delayed the tour of the line till a late hour, and it was after 5 a.m. on the 7th before the whole had been visited. By that time the companies were comfortably settled in. Commandant

Hérault and his adjutant, Captain Raymond de la Tour, impressed everyone, as had the excellent discipline and turn-out of their men during previous visits to the line. When relieving the French it was always embarrassing to arrive surrounded by a covey of officers: 2nd-in-command, adjutant—some regiments kept an assistant adjutant—intelligence officer, signalling officer, with possibly the transport officer and the quartermaster in the background, and to be received by the commandant and his adjutant who apparently between them fulfilled all the functions of the other great array.

“A” and “B” Companies were in front during this tour; their trenches faced nearly due south and were 500 yards from Barleux. “C” was in support and “D” in reserve. Hostile shell fire, at first remarkable by its absence, increased gradually, probably owing to the activity of our guns; Headquarters was shelled regularly and unpleasantly. Casualties, one man killed and one wounded, were lighter than during any spell in the line since the Battle of Loos. The man killed lost his life through trying to throw a French bomb, of which there were a lot lying about in odd places, that he did not understand. The wounded man, Private Casey, had been a guardsman years earlier. Now he must have been nearly fifty years old, yet he was full of life and dash. The frost was still as hard as ever, but the sun was hot, and the bitter wind had abated; for winter trenches the conditions approached perfection.

On the 10th the Regiment was relieved by the South Wales Borderers and withdrew to comfortable quarters in support. Headquarters went to a great dugout, near the top of the Boyau de Boulogne, which held everyone: runners, officers, servants, signallers. The companies were scattered round Flaucourt: “A” Company in the Bois de Bretons, a small copse just south of the entrance to the Boyau de Boulogne, “C” in the sugar factory in the southern part of the village, “B” in Meudon Quarry, “D” in Flaucourt Quarry, 600 yards north of it. The sugar factory was the best place, though all were good. Small working parties had to be provided every day. The weather was glorious; by now all were inured to the cold, and everyone was very fit and always ravenously hungry. There was much to be seen, and the exploration of the next bit of line that the Regiment would occupy—to the right of the sector previously held—provided plenty of exercise. One night the transport officer of a

battalion in the line was retrieved and taken back to his limbers; while searching for his Headquarters he had crossed Crouzas without noticing it and was straying towards the foremost trench.

The 28th went up again on 14th February. The line now occupied was due west of Barleux and was held with three companies—"A," "C" and "D" from right to left—in front, with "B" in support in the part of "Tranchée Gigerol" that was bounded by the Boyaux named Genie and Roumanie. Headquarters was in excellent dugouts in a Quarry in Boulogne Wood. Hostile shelling had increased, and the right company was bothered by trench mortars, but casualties were few. One of them, Private Lowe, the cook of the Headquarter officers' mess, was wounded on the way up to the line. Signs of the end of the long frost were now apparent; light rain on the 16th, warm air and fog on the 17th and heavy rain on the 18th had already affected the trenches when the Regiment left them on the evening of the latter day to march to Telegraph Camp, a mile north-west of Dompierre. In this wretched collection of broken-down dugouts the effect of the thaw was very evident; the mud was over one's ankles, and the shelters were full of water. The conditions became so bad that "B" Company was moved to cellars in Dompierre on the 20th.

MAP 7

Before coming out to Telegraph Camp the Regiment had been warned to do a raid in the near future. The details are forgotten, except that the party was to advance from near the left of the battalion front on a magnetic bearing of 113 degrees and to deal with the first and second German trenches. Practice was carried out on the driest portions of the swamp near the camp. On the 21st the Regiment went back to the same trenches as before, leaving the raiding party behind to continue its rehearsals. The trenches were now in a shocking state, knee deep in mud, and in some places actually impassable. Next afternoon Second Lieutenant F. C. Granger, who was to command the raid, was out in front examining the ground. He got nearer and nearer to the enemy's line without interruption and finally entered it. He went about 30 yards each way along the trench without meeting a foeman; then he returned, laden with bombs and all kinds of other trophies. He reported that, bad as our trenches were, those of the enemy were worse and that our raiders were bound to be stuck in the mud directly they reached

MAP 10

the objective. This was reported to the Divisional Commander, who immediately cancelled the attempt. It was fortunate that General Strickland was a man who knew his own mind; in some Divisions the raid would have been done whatever the state of the ground. Raids for the sake of raiding were the worst part of the war. Nobody minded going over to get a necessary identification, but the other kind "to maintain the fighting spirit of the troops" was loathed by everyone who lived within bullet range of the enemy. A unit that needed such encouragement should have been disbanded, or at least its commander should have been replaced. After the abandonment of the raid the 28th was relieved by the Northamptonshire at 8 p.m. on the 23rd and marched to Chuignes, five miles west of Barleux, by the road through Dompierre. German S O S signals during the relief resulted in a heavy hostile barrage which hurt no one in either regiment.

At Chuignes a lot of useful training was done. A new method of attack, known later as the "Normal Form of Attack," was practised daily. Its exact details are too hazily remembered to be described, but it was the forerunner of modern infantry formations, and, modified as experience was gained, was to have a far-reaching effect on the future battles of the war. Its essential difference from the methods hitherto employed was that attacking troops advanced in small columns in depth instead of in lines. Founded on the pre-war "Artillery Formation" and made possible by the arming of two of the four sections of a platoon with Lewis guns, it gave much greater power of manœuvre and of mutual support. Apart from training, the only notable event was the defeat of the 2nd Welch by a try to nothing at rugby football on 1st March.

On 4th March the 28th left Chuignes at 8.30 a.m., and marching by way of Dompierre and Assevillers, relieved the 10th Battalion of the Regiment in Great Wood, on the south side of the Assevillers-Barleux road, just west of Boulogne Wood; the change-over was completed by 11.15 a.m. Here the 28th remained in support till 7th March, providing large working parties daily for trench maintenance; on the 6th everyone went to Assevillers for "foot washing," as the new "foot drill" had now come to be called. The next move was into the line to relieve the South Wales Borderers in a sector farther south than that previously held, though for 200 yards or so the sectors

overlapped. "B" Company was on the right, "D" on the left, "A" in support, "C" in reserve. Headquarters was again in the Quarry in Boulogne Wood; the comfortable dugouts were most attractive to the enemy's guns. There was a maze of trenches everywhere, made without apparent plan; it was easy to get lost in them and impossible to keep them in repair. Though not nearly so bad as those held during the winter they were muddy enough to be unpleasant. On the 11th the South Wales Borderers took them over again, and the 28th retired to Assevillers to occupy decent cellars and dugouts in the village. Headquarters was in an immense underground dwelling full of rooms and passages, reputed to be an old German dressing station; these huge subterranean places, the like of which we never attempted to make, existed all over the Somme area.

MAP 7

At this time the transport lines were at Fontaines les Cappy, close to the house that had been the headquarters of the 61st when it held the line, which then ran about 300 yards west of Dompierre, in the summer of 1915. There were several people serving in the 28th who had been with the 61st in those days, and it was interesting to walk over from Assevillers to explore, under their guidance, these old-time trenches. There were some amazing mine craters between the lines. Judging by the state of the church, which hardly had a stone out of place, the shelling then must have been mild compared to that of 1916. A notable feature was a kind of cliff, north of the village and just below the Chuignes-Dompierre road. Tiers of comfortable dugouts had been driven into it, probably by the French; each row had a wide veranda in front, and the flights of steps and winding paths that gave access to them were complete and well arranged. It is remarkable how much time both our allies and our opponents spent on architecture both above and below ground. The transport was very comfortable at Fontaines. The weather at Assevillers was wet. On the 12th and 13th large fatigue parties were supplied to the Royal Engineers for some now forgotten work. The place was lightly shelled on the 14th. On the 15th the line was taken over from the South Wales Borderers on the same frontage as before. Owing to the shocking state of the trenches, the relief was sticky, and was not finished until 3 a.m. on the 16th; however, the South Wales Borderers were very forbearing. Second-Lieutenant R. A. Beale and two men were killed during the relief. "A" Company went in on

MAP 10

the right, and "C" on the left; "D" was in support, and "B" in reserve.

The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, caused by our continual pressure since July 1916, had already begun, and in consequence there was much excitement in high places. At 12.30 p.m. on the 16th the C.O. was summoned to Brigade Headquarters; on arrival he was told that the enemy opposite the Brigade was expected to withdraw that night and was ordered to send out a strong patrol at midnight to try to establish itself in the hostile trenches. If the effort was successful the trenches were to be occupied, and the advance continued at dawn. At the same time the 2nd Welch on the right and the 10th Gloucestershire on the left were to make similar attempts. There was little time for preparation, but there was a fairly obvious place; possibly it was too obvious. On the south side of the road from Bernay to Barleux there was a ditch—probably an old communication trench that had existed when the opposing front lines were part of the same trench system—running from our line to that of the Germans. This had been used by patrols the last time in and would guide the raiding party to its objective. Therefore it was decided to enter the enemy's line at the point where this ditch approached it. Officers and men of "C" Company who had been trained for the cancelled raid of February were detailed for the job; they were a more cohesive party than any other that could be collected in a hurry. "D" Company was to occupy the enemy's trenches should the first attack be successful.

The affair started up to time. It was intended as a surprise and was therefore without artillery support. The party left our trenches and proceeded stealthily along the ditch towards the enemy's line, and for a seemingly long time the silence of the night was undisturbed. Then, suddenly, it became uproarious with the clatter of machine guns and the explosion of bombs, which continued for a while and died away. Nothing more happened till a hot and breathless figure emerged from the darkness and entered our trench. This proved to be a slightly wounded member of the patrol. He reported that, having found a way through the enemy's wire, the leaders had reached the parapet without interruption, but as they were preparing to enter the trench, showers of bombs descended on them, while machine-gun fire opened, apparently from either flank. The

patrol, the rear of which was still outside the wire, scattered, and the advance stopped; he himself had returned to report the situation. It was clear that the matter could not be left like this; therefore, with the wounded man as guide, a small party set out to investigate. Some of the patrol were collected on our side of the wire; after it was crossed Lieutenant Granger and three wounded men were found at the foot of the parapet together with two who were not wounded. Two of the wounded were able to return under their own steam; the third was conveyed on the back of one of the unwounded. Lieutenant Granger, however, was a different problem. He was delirious owing to his desperate wounds and cried out loudly directly any attempt was made to move him; therefore it was decided to leave him where he was for the time being. No. 32992 Private C. Barker stayed with him and eventually brought him in before daylight. Private Barker got a Military Medal for this; many a man got a higher reward for a lesser deed. Lieutenant Granger died of his wounds. He was a brave man. Thoughtlessly some of the investigators forgot to use the ditch for the return journey and reached our line a hundred yards or so farther south. Their ingratiating reply to the sentry's challenge was answered by a Mills grenade, which changed their gentle words to fearful oaths; according to the sentry this alone saved them from more bombs; no harm was done except to the skirt of Captain Laverder's mackintosh. The impression gained from the affair was that the enemy was holding his trenches in the normal manner, though it is possible that the patrol struck a strong party covering his retirement. It was now not far off dawn on 17th March. The Commanding Officer returned to Headquarters—the journey there took time owing to the state of the trenches—but before he could report to the Brigade he was himself rung up by the Divisional Commander, who told him that during the night the 48th Division, next on the left to the 1st Division, had found that the enemy's trenches were empty.

Accordingly each of the leading companies was ordered to try again: by sending out a strong patrol to force an entrance into the enemy's line. Shortly after 8 a.m. both patrols were successful; that on the left met with no opposition while the one on the right quickly overcame the slight resistance offered to it. They were followed by two platoons of each leading company, which occupied the front and second lines and continued

the advance beyond them, without getting in touch with the enemy. The whole battalion was soon on the move; it was a fine sight to see it advancing in the latest approved formations under moderately heavy shell fire. The leading and initiative of the foremost platoon commanders—notably Second-Lieutenant C. L. Priestley—were most encouraging. By 1 p.m. the Villers Carbonell-Peronne road, immediately north-east of the former place, had been reached. From here the Somme was overlooked, and a good view of the ground rising from its farther bank was obtained. An outpost line was established 800 yards forward of the road, and touch was gained with the 2nd Welch on the right and the 10th Gloucestershire on the left. There was no sign of the enemy, though any considerable movement of troops attracted shells and sometimes bullets. Orders were received from the Brigade to occupy the position, so the Regiment was established in Isar Trench, about 100 yards behind the road, the outpost line in Jonas Trench, some 800 yards farther forward, with patrols till dark on the river at Brie Bridge. Hostile shell fire continued till after dark but had ceased altogether by 10 p.m. The only casualty during the advance was one man who got a direct hit with a five-nine and was seen no more.

Headquarters was allotted one of the underground palaces that abounded. It was three stories deep. Warnings had been issued as to the booby traps left behind by the enemy, so the great dugout was approached with caution. A chair lying on the wide entrance staircase was found to have tied to it a telephone wire, which disappeared into the darkness below. The wire was cut, and the trail was followed; in a small room at the foot of the stairs the other end of the wire was discovered, tied to the release of a stick bomb; the latter, in company with two large dud shells, was firmly fixed on top of a heap of gun powder. Had the chair been moved out of the way by the first user of the staircase, the jerk would certainly have exploded the bomb and the powder; it is doubtful what effect the explosion would have had on the shells. No further traps were found, and the whole of Headquarters got in comfortably.

The position was held all next day: in the evening the South Wales Borderers relieved the 28th, and the latter went back to dugouts and shelters in and around Boulogne Wood. During the day, though the bridge was broken down, a patrol under

Second-Lieutenant G. F. M. Forbes got across the river, examined the village of Brie and pushed on for a mile or two beyond it; no hostile troops were seen, though the party was fired at with rifles more than once. Since rumours were about of the poisoning of wells by the retreating enemy, the patrol brought back samples of water for analysis.

On the 19th the whole Battalion was at work all day at Brie; MAP 7 on the 20th it marched back to Chuignes and went into quarters there. The men were in excellent huts south of the village, and the officers were in comfortable shelters in the sides of the narrow valley along which ran the road to Foucaucourt. The huts were equipped with wire beds and were entirely weather-proof; some of the shelters approached the height of luxury, having large open fireplaces, wooden beds and even doors and windows; they were all French work.

The Regiment stayed at Chuignes until 7th April, and everyone was well content there, chiefly owing to the absence of fatigues; except that on 21st March the whole Regiment was employed on mending roads in the forward area, the time was spent at training. The "Normal Formation of the Attack" was practised daily under the close supervision of the Divisional Commander. There was no work on Sundays; this had a civilising influence and was valuable from other points of view. The soldier's service dress—he only possessed one suit, and that was often "part worn" when he got it—had a short life owing to the wear and tear of the trenches, and he was frequently clad in threadbare garments. For his comfort and self-respect it was essential that such conditions should be remedied quickly, and these Sundays off were excellent opportunities for parades of the whole battalion for clothing inspection.

Summer time began on 24th March, but the spring was late, and the weather varied considerably. Snow to begin with was succeeded by bright cold weather culminating in a balmy day on 25th March; then, after a period of rain, heavy snow and bitter winds, the last few days were pleasant, with the larks singing vigorously everywhere.

General Craufurd had left the Brigade shortly before the German withdrawal and was succeeded, after a short interval, by Brigadier-General R. C. McCalmont, an Irish Guardsman and Ulster M.P., who had brought an Ulster battalion to France and afterwards commanded the Irish Guards. He knew

exactly what he wanted and had no fads or fancies; provided that his Battalion Commanders were well-willed and fully-witted he never interfered with their execution of his orders; thus he was an almost ideal Brigadier. On 4th April he inspected the 28th minutely—the inspection had to be done in huts owing to a terrific snowstorm—and found most things to his liking, for the company commanders, unaltered since the beginning of the previous November, were now doing their work admirably. Captain Mallet had entirely justified his selection to succeed Captain Wynter-Morgan. When a small boy, his military ardour was aroused by the 61st, then stationed in his native Jersey; as soon as he was old enough he enlisted in the Regiment and in the course of time became a notable drill instructor. He went to France with the 28th as a sergeant; except for a period of ten weeks in 1914 when he was in England owing to wounds and another of a few weeks at a Cadet School in France in 1916 before getting a commission he was never away from it till he was wounded again on 31st October, 1918. He died in hospital at Rouen the day after the war ended. Major Smith was second-in-command, and Regimental Sergeant-Major Brain had returned. Captain H. E. Collier, the doctor, had joined in January; he remained with the 28th till June, 1918, and during his stay identified himself completely with the life of the Regiment.

A good deal of football was played. The Munsters and Brigade Headquarters were beaten at soccer and the South Wales Borderers, by 26 points to nothing, at rugby. On 5th April an Officers' rugby match against the Munsters was won at Proyard; this engagement attracted an enormous crowd, including General Strickland, from all over the Division. Successful rat hunts took place daily, for these beasts abounded in the officers' lines; it was no uncommon thing to be awakened at night by one of them nibbling at some part of one's face. Altogether the time at Chuignes went very pleasantly.

At its conclusion the Regiment moved forward, marching by way of Dompierre, Assevillers and Barleux to Peronne, where it went into billets in the street leading up from the river to the west end of the "Place," the large central square and market-place of the town. When the Germans occupied these billets they had filled the cellars with beds, carpets, armchairs and other furniture from the houses above; consequently our men lodged more comfortably than usual. The officers of Head-

quarters lived above ground in a draughty house near the top of the street; bits of it were always tumbling down, and one day the collapse of part of the ceiling of the living room brought with it a shower of golden coins.

The Division was employed in mending railway lines, miles of which had been blown up, and roads, which were blocked by enormous mine craters at every junction. This destruction was fair warfare. The town was a picturesque old place with magnificent ramparts running from the river, round its northern side, and back towards the river again. The fine old church, together with the Town Hall, stood on the wide Place. Peronne had been little shelled before its evacuation by the Germans; they, however, did their best to ruin it before departing. The ramparts were too much for them, but they had blown up the church and many of the houses; nearly every tree had been felled or cut half through. Now and then a house would go sky high owing to the explosion of a delayed action mine, though the Town Hall, suspected owing to the example of that at Bapaume and therefore isolated by a strong barbed wire fence, gave no trouble. Such methods of making war are not admirable, and it is difficult to imagine the German front-line soldier—generally a decent enough fighter—using them; probably they were ordered by some ancient super-Prussian far away behind.

The Regiment was employed entirely at railway work, chiefly on the line near the main station and on the bridge north of it. The rest of the Brigade was far away. At 7 a.m. each morning the 28th paraded in the Place to do ten minutes' arms drill; this was generally a cold performance but was necessary because for the rest of the day nearly everyone became a navvy. After breakfast the various parties went off to their work, taking a haversack ration with them; the hours were not too long, nor was the work unpleasant; it was much better, at any rate, than mending roads. The officers and N.C.Os. not required with working parties were trained on ground admirably suited for the purpose on the north side of the river. In the evening the drums played on the Place. Their standard was high, and their performances gave pleasure, not only to the men of the Regiment, but to those of other divisions quartered in and about the town and to the drivers of the masses of lorries parked at the eastern end of the Place. Altogether Peronne was a comfortable place, and no one was pleased to move out of it,

on the 16th, to a camp at Belle View Farm, 1,200 yards south of the main station, on the Villers Carbonell road. The tents were pitched between the road and the river; on the other side of the road were the ruins of the farm. The weather, at first most inclement, gradually got more springlike and during the last week in the camp was really hot; the belated spring greenery burst forth with the coming of the sun. The river here was about 300 yards across, dotted with rush-grown islands and providing pleasant bathing pools; the pale new foliage of the willows on its banks made it lovely; near the town it was crossed by several German-built wooden footbridges, zigzagging from island to island. The Regiment continued its work on the railway, preceded daily by a short parade before breakfast. The working parties were more scattered now; to visit them and various signalling stations, posted, to keep touch with Brigade Headquarters, on the high ground north-west of the town, took four or five hours daily.

The country round consisted of rolling downland, delightful to ride over, with small woods and villages scattered about; as was usual on the Somme there were no isolated farms. North of Peronne the ground rose steeply to the heights of Mont St. Quentin, 400 feet up; it was indeed fortunate for us that the enemy had not waited to be attacked in this strong position. South of the town and west of the river the slopes were more gradual. After crossing the river between the camp and Eterpigny one passed through the village of Le Mesnil Bruntel—much used by those at training for practising the attack and defence of villages—and climbed on to the ridge behind. Here had been the gun positions of the German heavy artillery. The observation posts were platforms, reached by long ladders, in the tall trees of the Bois des Cerisiers; beneath the trees were magnificent dugouts for the observers; the gun positions were in rear of the wood. On the west side of the Somme the ground rose still less steeply; here it was interesting to explore the enemy's old trenches, particularly those that encircled Barleux on its northern and western sides. At Peronne one was out of reach of any form of hostility except from the air; the only war-like incident was the appearance, on the afternoon of 25th April, of a German observation balloon floating slowly towards the camp on an easterly breeze; it came to earth on the other side of the river.

Captain Wetherall had been back for a while from the

Divisional School; during the stay at Peronne he left to command the 4th Oxfordshire Light Infantry in the 61st Division. He was unsurpassed—alike as leader and trainer—by any officer produced by the Regiment during the war. Wise beyond his years, unruffled by difficulty, danger or success, he was as careful for his men as he was insistent that they did things properly.

Much football was played at Peronne. The 7th Warwickshire was beaten by 2 goals to 1 at soccer; the 28th had an unaccustomedly good soccer team at this time. At rugby the Regiment beat a Casualty Clearing Station, its number now forgotten, by 55 points to 0 and the 143rd Brigade by 29 to nothing. The Sergeants beat the Officers by 3 tries to 2; puffed up by this victory they tried to take on the rest of the battalion and lost by 25 points to 3. Many Company matches were played, and one cold Sunday afternoon, despite the absence of their best players, the officers who could be collected in camp beat the servants by 14 points to 6 in a match arranged in a hurry in order to get warm.

The work at Peronne was finished on 5th May, and on 7th May the Regiment marched via Barleux, Flaucourt and Herbecourt to Eclusier, a village about seven miles west of Peronne. Here the Somme, confined by artificial banks, flowed close to the steep southern cliff of a shallow gorge about half a mile in width; its former bed, stretching to the northern boundaries of the gorge, was now a fertile plain traversed by streams and delicious to look at in its pale spring greenery. Eclusier was a tiny village lying just north of a bridge over the canalised part of the river. The men were quartered in large French huts under the cliff, the officers in shelters driven into it; Headquarters used the rooms of empty houses just north of the bridge. It was delightful to sleep in a tent—its outside covered with mayflies busy with the assumption of their final shape—under a cherry tree in an orchard full of blossom, close to the river and the weir, lulled by their music and that of many nightingales. The cuckoo called all day, and swallows, martins and swifts were everywhere. The abundance of mosquitoes was the only drawback.

There was plenty to do. The day's work began at 7 a.m. with drill on a grass parade ground at the top of the cliff above the huts, and the standard reached was high; for instance there

was not a tremor in the ranks when the C.O., sitting loosely in his saddle while explaining a proposed formation to the battalion in line, was put on the ground by a sudden swerve on the part of his horse. After breakfast hard training in the "Normal Formations of the Attack"—now a little hackneyed—went on till 2 p.m. The Brigadier had provided cups for boxing, swimming and both kinds of football, and the afternoons and evenings were taken up with these pursuits. The 28th did no good at boxing, but won all the other competitions. At rugby football the Munsters were beaten by 14 points to nothing, and in the final, the Welch by 6 to 0. At swimming all the open events—50, 100, 500 yards races, relay race, diving and water polo—were won.

About this time, owing to the increasing shortage of food in England, battalions and other units of our army in France were encouraged to relinquish part of the rations that they were entitled to, the theory being that the supply was really too large and could, with proper economy, be reduced. So many units complied with the suggestion that the others were regarded with suspicion. No doubt it was possible to forgo part of the rations without hardship, yet the whole could certainly be used advantageously if proper care were taken of the composition and quality of the meals. The life they led and the work they did ensured that the men were always hungry. Authorities on war from its earliest recorded days have recognised the value of feeding the soldier well and plentifully. Therefore the 28th continued to draw its full rations. As a result, the food expert of the Fourth Army descended on the Regiment, stayed two nights and closely examined the messing arrangements; his report was favourable enough to allow full rations to be drawn ever afterwards without incurring unkind comment.

The time spent at Eclusier was of great value; the weather was glorious, hot sunshine by day being succeeded by cool nights and relieved by frequent showers. The effect of the sun on their backs, hard exercise and good food combined with freedom from trenches and the absence of projectiles could already be detected in everyone; hollow cheeks began to fill out, and the frayed nerves of those who indulged in such things mended.

The next move, on 19th May, was to a village on the great main road from Amiens to St. Quentin, about eleven miles east of the former. The place—called Warfusée for short—

consisted of two rather scrubby hamlets bearing the elegant names of Warfusée Abancourt and Lamotte en Santerre respectively. The Regiment marched by way of Cappy and Proyart, and everyone arrived in excellent trim notwithstanding the length of the journey, the great heat and the heavy loads carried by the men. Training was continued with great fervour in extremely hot weather; the training ground—about Cerisy and Morcourt—was three or four miles from the billets, so early starts were necessary. The Divisional Commander was nearly always present and criticised the operations vigorously. On 21st May General Rawlinson, Commander of the Fourth Army, inspected the Regiment, and the training wound up on the 25th with a long brigade field day on a scorchingly hot day. At association football the Munsters, drawn with at Eclusier, were beaten in the semi-final of the brigade cup, and in the final the Machine Gun Company was beaten by a goal to nothing. The Regiment was successful in only one event in the brigade sports; it had no representative in the brigade team for the divisional boxing, which was held on 23rd May in a hangar just west of Villers Bretonneux. However, the Brigade won five out of the six events and was in the final of the other.

The 1st Division had been out of the line for over two months, despite ever recurring rumours that it was to be used against the Hindenburg Line, and peaceful training amid Elysian scenery had almost come to be regarded as the natural existence; therefore the tidings of an early departure to the Ypres neighbourhood were disturbing. The news was quickly followed by the orders for the move, and accordingly the 28th left its billets at 11.35 p.m. on 26th May, marched to Guillaucourt, a village about three miles south-east of Warfusée, partook of a meal outside the station, entrained and finally set off on its new adventure at 2.30 a.m. on the 27th. Very few of those who had detrained at Doullens eleven months earlier went with it.

CHAPTER X

YPRES, JUNE 1917—THE COAST BETWEEN DUNKIRK AND THE MOUTH OF THE YSER

MAP 15
MAP 11 THE train took a roundabout course by way of Amiens, Abbeville, Boulogne, Calais, St. Omer and Hazebrouck and arrived at Caestre, a village on the Cassel-Bailleul road about six miles south-east of Cassel, at 4.30 p.m. on 27th May. The journey was pleasant enough to those travelling two, or at the most four, in a first-class carriage and feeding well at short intervals, but the men were not so comfortable. They travelled in stuffy horse-boxes and owing to the vagaries of the Railway Transport Officers got no hot food or drink during the journey, although there were at least two occasions when such could have been provided had the military officials at the stations been more energetic. However, after a good meal partaken of in a field near the station at Caestre the troops were soon full of life and dash again. Having rested for two and a half hours the Regiment did the four remaining miles of its journey comfortably in the cool of the evening, marching through Caestre and Fletre and by a lane that turned off the main road half-way between Fletre and Meteren and led to a collection of farms about a mile north of the road. Here most of the men were lodged in tents with a few in farm-houses. The officers of Headquarters had a delightful farm administered by a charming lady; indeed all the inhabitants hereabouts were friendly, a great improvement on those in the Somme area. The countryside, homelike with its English-looking hedges and elm trees, its fields full of lush grass and buttercups, was delicious, and the weather was warm and summerlike; the whole gave promise of an existence as placid as that of the last two and a half months.

The Division was now part of the 14th Corps, the "Corps de Chasse"—though it did more navvying than chasing—for the impending attack on the Messines Ridge. By this time a few changes had taken place among the company commanders of the 28th. Captain Baxter had returned to "A" Company, while Second-Lieutenant Priestley had become a temporary

captain on 27th May to command "C" Company in place of Captain Davis, who had gone away to learn to be a staff officer.

Gentle training began at once. During a route march on 29th May the Regiment crossed the lower slopes of the Mont des Cats, which, crowned by its famous monastery, stood a few miles north of the camp. It was one of the queer hills—Mont Kemmel and the hill on which Cassel stood were others—that rose suddenly from the low plain; none of them were more than 500 feet high, but the steepness of their gradients combined with flatness of the surrounding country made them look like mountains.

At 4 p.m. on 31st May orders were received to move that night to a field about one and a quarter miles west of Dickebusch, twelve or thirteen miles away. Leaving a maintenance party in the camp, the 28th paraded at 7.45 p.m. and marched to its new abode by way of Mont Noir, Westoutre and Reninghelst. The evening was cool, and the journey over the wooded heights of Mont Noir was pleasant, but after dark the way through unknown country was difficult to find, particularly because a number of new roads, which had been made for military purposes, were not shown on the map. The field was reached at 12.30 a.m. on 1st June; it was called Mic Mac Camp, but its only claim to the title was based on the presence of half a dozen tents. After a meal, such shelters as could be contrived in the dark were erected, and everyone had turned in before dawn. When stock had been taken of it in the morning the spot proved quite desirable. The field was dry and was bordered with real hedges and fine elm trees; in it lived an amiable young bull and a lot of very tame cows with their calves. There was a good dugout at its northern end, but the appropriation of this was stopped by the entreaties of the commander of a neighbouring pioneer battalion; he said it was his place of refuge when the enemy shelled his camp.

The reason for this move was that the Regiment, in common with others of the Reserve Corps, had been detailed to take part in the preparations for the coming battle. The 28th was attached to the 41st Division; work began on the evening of 1st June and continued without interruption till the day before the attack. The whole battalion was on fatigue day and night; the working parties were chiefly employed in carrying trench mortars and their ammunition to the front and support-line

trenches east of St. Eloi. It was interesting to visit places like Scottish Wood, Ridge Wood and Vormezelee, whose names were so familiar, and to compare the conditions and methods of war existing in the Ypres Salient with those of the Somme and Loos battlefields. The principal impression gained was that the defences were flimsy and the approaches indifferent, for if ever a locality called for concrete it was this. From the edge of Ridge Wood the preliminary bombardments of the enemy's positions could be clearly viewed, and it was thrilling to watch the whole countryside opposite apparently going up in smoke and dust; the fact that such a vast amount of ammunition could be spared for practice shoots made one ponder how the supply of the adjuncts of warfare had changed since the summer of 1915. Although there was a lot of promiscuous shelling none of the working parties were damaged; the camp was only shelled once, and that but lightly.

The return march on 6th June was done successfully on an extremely hot day, and the 28th settled down once more in the "Camp near Meteren," as it was now officially called. Soon after arrival, a letter thanking the Regiment for its excellent work was received from General Lawford, the Commander of the 41st Division. An inter-section soccer competition entailing 63 matches, started during the previous stay in the camp and interrupted by the move forward, was resumed, and training began again. The overpowering heat was diminished on the evening of the 7th by a deluge of rain which lasted for one and a half hours.

At this period it took sixteen or seventeen months for a man in the ranks to get leave, a deplorable state of affairs, which could easily have been remedied, and which annoyed the front-line soldier the more when he remembered that every squirt who had wriggled into a safe job far behind the line got his leave often and regularly. Otherwise the men were happy enough, for the art of living under war conditions had been perfected in all its branches.

On 9th June the Regiment got sudden orders to move forward again, very much out of its turn. The attack on the Messines Ridge having succeeded, working parties were now required to clear the battlefield. The Regiment paraded at 3.15 p.m., and marching by way of Berthen, M, Y and W routes, Millekruise and Dickebusch, reached its destination, a field on the

northern shore of Dickebusch Lake, at 9 p.m. M, Y and W routes were the new military roads already encountered; this time a map that showed them was provided. The field was full of long grass and enormous shell-holes and contained enough tents for everyone. The Regiment was required to make roads and lay waterpipes in the newly captured area; the distances that had to be marched to and from the work, the exceptionally hot weather, the lack of clean clothes and baths and the strenuousness of the eight-hour shifts all tended towards the discomfort of the troops; yet the amount of work they got through was remarkable. The working parties experienced heavy shelling at times, a certain amount of it being gas, but the only casualty was one officer slightly wounded.

The territory in which they were employed was worth exploring. After walking through the ruins of Vormezele to the spot in our old front line where St. Eloi had formerly stood, one came to the huge craters of the mines that had been exploded immediately before the attack. Unlike those on the Somme, they had no depth; they looked like the vast beds of shallow dried-up lakes. Had proof of the efficiency of our artillery fire been needed by those who had witnessed the preliminary bombardments, the state of the ground around and behind the enemy's shattered positions would have provided it; there was hardly a square foot of earth that had not been turned over. A little farther on was the Dam Strasse, an artificial bank nearly a mile long which bore a road leading to the ruins of the White Chateau, the reputed summer residence of a former king of Belgium. Many of the troops who had taken part in the battle were still in the area, and their accounts of the fighting were encouraging; the success of the attack, a perfect example of careful preparation and execution, raised hopes for the future that were, alas, never quite fulfilled.

A visit to Ypres on another day was enlightening. The town was completely wrecked, and apart from one despatch rider on a motor bicycle, also on sight-seeing bent, there was no one in the streets, though here and there the head and shoulders of a gas sentry emerged from the entrance to a cellar. The railway station was on fire although it might have been expected that anything inflammable there would already have been burnt, and the neighbourhood of the Cloth Hall was being plastered with shells.

The work was completed on 14th June, and orders were received to rejoin the 1st Division next day; the Regiment was to go to Berthen by the tracks used on the outward journey and was to be guided thence by an orderly. The march began at 7 a.m. on a scorching hot morning, and Berthen was reached soon after 10 a.m., but no guide was forthcoming. After a long wait in a shadeless field, the midday meal was eaten, and still no orderly arrived. By the time that he turned up with orders to direct the 28th to the village of Hondeghem, nine miles away on the road from Bailleul to St. Omer, the heat was terrific, and the day was utterly airless. Soon after the start the heavily laden men began to show signs of exhaustion; the number who collapsed in the ranks increased steadily. Therefore the cookers, which had been sent on to Hondeghem, were recalled, and the tea meal was eaten on the roadside just west of Caestre. After a long halt during which all the casualties were collected, the march was resumed in the cool of the evening, and billets were reached at 9 p.m.

This performance was not one to be proud of. An earlier start would certainly have been desirable, but the men had been at work till late the evening before, and the C.O. had not been told that a march of over seventeen miles was to be undertaken; indeed the fact that a guide was sent to meet the Regiment at Berthen encouraged the belief that its goal was close to that place.

The weather on the 16th was hotter than ever, so the departure from Hondeghem was delayed till 5 p.m.; the march to Staple, a village three miles westward, was done comfortably. Staple was an agreeable village, and the weather while the 28th lived there was as fine as could be. Owing to intensive cultivation little training could be done, and the time was chiefly spent in overhauling clothing, kits and equipment. The officers of Headquarters lodged in the priest's house which stood opposite the church in the small village square. The companies were mostly in scattered farms north of the village, so scattered that to ride round the whole of them, by pleasant green lanes with something every five yards for a horse to shy at, took over two hours. The most distant farm possessed a large pool which was usually full of the signallers who were billeted there.

One day Captain D. Duncan visited the Regiment. He had handed over the adjutancy to Captain Bosanquet in March 1915

and joined 3rd Brigade Headquarters, where he stayed till he went to the staff of a division in June 1916. During the first year of the war he experienced as much of its "horrors" as anyone, yet his serenity was undisturbed; he was an example to those who allowed their nerves to be wrecked too easily. His gentle humour and charming nature made him a delightful companion; he was probably the best forward who ever played rugby football for the Regiment.

The stay at Staple came to an end on the 21st. It had been arranged that British troops should take over from the French the coastal sector of the line, which extended from the sea at Nieuport Bains to where the Belgian front began south of Nieuport. The 1st Division was one of those detailed for the duty. Either because of the great heat or to conceal the fact that the change was taking place, the marches northward were done very early in the morning. On 21st June the Regiment had to pass the Brigade starting-point, the cross-roads named Les Trois Rois, more than two miles north of Staple, at 4.30 a.m., so an early start was necessary. The head of the battalion passed the point exactly at the required time without checking or hurrying, despite the fact that the four companies and headquarters each started from a different spot and had to get into their places at a regimental starting-point before arriving at that of the Brigade. In order to avoid marching up Cassel Hill and down again the Brigade went by way of Zuytpeene and Wemaers Cappel and arrived at Wormhoudt, the end of the first stage of the journey, at 9.10 a.m. Here the day was spent in comfortable billets. Next morning the march was continued at 3.15 a.m., and the Regiment reached its new home, a seaside resort called Malo-les-Bains, just east of the moat of Dunkirk, at 9.40 a.m., by way of Tax and Galgheoch. During the last two hours of the march rain fell heavily, and the journey through the dull, flat country was displeasing. However, the delights revealed on arrival made up for everything. The whole battalion was billeted in villas on the sea front of the mushroom watering-place; Dunkirk, by far the largest inhabited town that the 28th had been within reach of since landing in France, was less than a mile away. On Saturday, 23rd June, the day after arrival, billets were inspected, and a little battalion drill was done on the beach, where the firm sands spread wide; on the Sunday, after a church parade, everyone indulged in sea bathing. There was no other

work on either day, and in the afternoons and evenings most of the men went to Dunkirk. On the Sunday afternoon it was entertaining to sit and watch the promenaders from the town and to gaze with them at the low-flying aeroplanes of some adjacent squadron skimming the tops of the waves.

On the 25th the Regiment, marching off at 8.15 a.m. *en route* for Furnes, went by road to Leffrinkehoucke Bridge over the Dunkirk-Bruges Canal and there embarked in five barges, manned by personnel of the Inland Water Transport, to join which was the aim of every unwilling conscript from the moment of his conscription. This new method of transport delighted everyone, particularly because, during the lazy journey along the canal, the toilers up and down the main road were nearly always visible. North of the canal, between it and the sea, were endless sand dunes; on the south were flat cultivated fields. The language of the crews in their efforts to live up to the tradition of their new calling would have shocked a professional bargee.

On arrival at Furnes at 2.15 p.m. the barges were towed into a square dock in the centre of the town, and the troops, having disembarked, partook of a meal on the quay, diverted the while by the varied activities of this inland harbour where most of the work seemed to be done by very young Belgian soldiers. After a long wait the 28th set off again and marched to St. Iddesbalde, another of the many watering-places that had sprung up on the coast between Dunkirk and Ostend, just before the war. In most cases a village, a mile more or less inland, had thrown its "Bains" northward on to the coast—La Panne, Coxyde, Oost Dunkerke and Nieuport are examples—and a sea front had been built, with villas, hotels and shops. St. Iddesbalde differed from the majority in that there was no village of the same name just south of it; it was also newer and smaller than most of the others.

The march from Furnes to Iddesbalde, over perfectly flat country and then among sandhills, was not exhilarating, but the large number of heavy guns that were moving along the road gave one something to think about. On arrival the Regiment went into tents and villas among the sandhills. The conditions existing at St. Iddesbalde were odd. It was only six miles behind the line and was frequently shelled, yet the hotel was open, and a number of English people were staying there. The officers of Headquarters, billeted in the hotel, lived in comparative luxury; their comfort was increased by the return of Private Lowe.

Having recovered from his wound of the previous February, he had been sent to the 8th Gloucestershire Regiment; his restoration, most beneficial to the digestions of those whose food he prepared, was entirely due to the good will of the commander of that battalion.

Time passed pleasantly at St. Iddesbalde, and the weather was delightful. Battalion drill was generally done on the shore before breakfast, and the rest of the morning was occupied by training, energetically superintended by the Major-General. Except for the beach, only the sandhills, which extended 2,000 yards inland, were available, for the country beyond them was too closely cultivated to be used. After the morning's work the whole battalion went into the sea; everyone enjoyed these bathing parades except on the occasion when contact with a shoal of jellyfish caused intense discomfort to many of the swimmers. On 27th June General Strickland inspected a draft of 81 men that had joined at Staple; another small batch of men arrived on the 30th. Since January drafts had been few and scanty so these slight reinforcements were welcome.

On 1st July, after a church parade on the sands in the morning, a brigade race meeting, attended by the Prince of Wales and many French and Belgian officers, took place on the beach a short distance west of St. Iddesbalde; except that there was a shortage of bandoliers of ammunition for use as weight cloths, and thus the number of riders was limited, the meeting was a great success. On the evening of 2nd July the Regiment beat an Australian Heavy Artillery Brigade at rugby by 11 points to 3. The game was played on the shore, and the adversaries, many of whom were stripped to the waist, claimed that they were unbeaten since their formation. Later the same evening, a ball, arranged by the English, French and Belgian visitors aided by certain officers of the Regiment, was held in the hotel where Headquarters lived, and though the Assistant Provost Marshal arrived during the proceedings and tried to interfere, the entertainment was entirely successful; it is improbable that during the war any similar function took place so near the line. The King of the Belgians had his Headquarters at La Panne, the nearest coastal resort on the west, and the Regiment made friends with several of his officers. One, the commander of a cavalry regiment, was particularly fond of the 28th and liked to share in its amusements. His officers finished second and third

in the open race at the Brigade meeting, and he brought most of them to watch the match against the Australians.

All good things come to an end some time, and on 3rd July, after spending the day strenuously on a brigade exercise, the Regiment marched at 8 p.m. to relieve the 2nd/60th in a comfortable hutment named Bador Camp, about half a mile south-east of Coxyde Bains, the next seaside place on the east. "B" Company went to a secret destination to work under the chief engineer of the Division. Less than twenty-four hours were spent at Bador Camp, and at 8.40 p.m. on the 4th a move was made across country to Juriac Camp, which, admirably camouflaged from the air by the drifting sand, lay among the dunes about three-quarters of a mile away. The new camp was comfortable, and for a few days training continued uneventfully in lovely weather; the only drawback was the loss of the sea bathing. On the 6th "C" Company departed to join "B," and with it went Major Smith to command the whole detachment; the destination of these companies was still a secret as far as the 28th was concerned. On 7th July the 10th Battalion was beaten at rugby by 29 points to nothing after a dull game. The exploration of the dunes provided exercise as well as amusement, for the going was heavy, and the sun was hot; the folds of the sand hills concealed huge disused concrete emplacements for heavy guns; with the aid of field-glasses or a telescope extensive views of the line, the river and the coast were obtainable from some of the loftier hillocks.

The relief of the French was now complete, and the 1st Division held the line from the coast southward, with the 32nd Division on its right. The 3rd Brigade, hitherto in reserve, had replaced the 2nd in support, the latter having taken over the trenches from the 1st Brigade. The line lay on the east side of the canalised River Yser, and the trenches were dug in sand, barely 600 yards from the bank; thus the position lacked depth. The communications, even had the swiftly flowing tidal river been adequately bridged, were unreliable, and the trenches, however well revetted, were extremely susceptible to shell fire. When the line was taken over from the French the only means of crossing the river was by three floating bridges erected close to its mouth, and the trenches, almost destitute of dugouts, were in poor condition. The lack of heavy artillery was an additional weakness; all the big French guns had gone, but only a few of ours had moved in. Altogether

the two battalions holding the line were precariously situated. Directly we occupied the position we set to work to remedy its defects, but the enemy, doubtless perturbed at the change in nationality of the troops opposed to him, forestalled us. Since the 1st Division arrived at the seaside, hostile shelling had been negligible, but on 6th July it increased and by the 9th had become serious, Coxyde Bains and other important military areas being shelled at frequent intervals during the day and far into the night. Next morning an intense bombardment of both trenches and bridges began, and neither proved capable of withstanding it. The weapons of the troops in the line—the 2nd/60th and 1st Northamptonshire—were jammed by clouds of flying sand, and when towards evening the enemy's artillery fire ceased, and his infantry advanced, the attackers' task was easy, notwithstanding our troops' stout resistance with the bayonet. Only a few men of the two battalions got away by swimming the river; the remainder were killed or captured.

The 28th took no part in the affair till the evening; then, at 9.15 p.m., it was attached to the 2nd Brigade and sent to Nieuport Bains at the mouth of the Yser. Owing to the absence of the Brigadier on leave, the C.O. was at Brigade Headquarters, and Captain Baxter commanded the Regiment. The Welch and South Wales Borderers were holding the coast between Nieuport Bains and Coxyde Bains, and the Munsters occupied the western bank of the river southward from the former place. After capturing the trenches east of the river the Germans made no further effort, and things gradually simmered down. "D" Company returned to Juriac Camp on the 11th, and "A" on the 13th, but the Regiment remained attached to the 2nd Brigade. While the companies were at Nieuport Bains, where they occupied houses and cellars on the sea front and a covered trench running among the houses, they were considerably shelled, with the result that Captain Chamier, Captain Lavender, Second-Lieutenant C. C. T. Clayton, who died at La Panne on 19th July, and Second-Lieutenant F. T. Howell were wounded, and one man was killed. Captain Chamier thus left the 28th for the first time since he had joined it in December 1914; after two and a half years as a company officer in the line he deserved a rest. Captain Lavender never returned to the 28th; he was wounded again in the autumn of 1918 while serving with the 2nd/5th Battalion. He had commanded "D" Company for

nearly a year and had done magnificent service since he joined the Regiment in November 1915; his unfailing calm was ever an inspiration to those less courageous than himself. Second-Lieutenant Clayton had joined in January 1917; his early death cut short a promising military career and deprived the Regiment of a remarkable caricaturist.

On the 12th heavy fatigue parties had to be found to work for the corps signals. At 11 p.m. on the 13th there were alarms of a fresh attack, this time against the 32nd Division, and the 28th stood to, the wretched "A" Company having only just returned; however, the excitement soon subsided, and everyone was at rest again before midnight.

Shelling of back areas had now almost ceased, but every night German aeroplanes scattered bombs over the dunes, and some of the neighbouring camps suffered. Juriac, nearly buried in sand, must have been hard to locate from the air; at any rate, though plenty of bombs fell near it, none ever took effect.

After several false alarms the 2nd Brigade was relieved on 17th July by a brigade of the 66th Division and began to move westward, accompanied by the 28th. The first day's march, through Coxyde, La Panne Bains and Adinkerke to Leffrinkehoucke, lasted eight hours including an interval of an hour for the midday meal. Owing to the cool weather the journey was enjoyable, though the traffic on the road beside the canal was heavy, and staff cars, passing and repassing incessantly, were a nuisance. On arrival at Leffrinkehoucke, a widely scattered collection of farms, the Regiment was informed that no billets were available and that therefore it must bivouac; eventually sufficient barns and shelters were found, but it was late before everyone was stowed away.

Next morning, after an early breakfast, the march was resumed, and the Regiment in company with the 2nd Brigade went through Dunkirk to a camp three and a half miles farther west, where the night was spent in tents. On 19th July the 28th started again at 3 p.m. and arrived at Le Clipon Camp, situated among the sandhills close to the sea, about six and a half miles west of Dunkirk, at 4.30 p.m. The whole of the 1st Division was assembled here, and it was pleasant to rejoin the 3rd Brigade.

CHAPTER XI

LE CLIPON CAMP

At this period the success of the German submarine attacks on our communications threatened to have a decisive effect on the war, and the Allied Governments were much perturbed by their inability to find a means of competing with the situation. The Admiralty considered that the danger could only be overcome by keeping the submarine base at Zeebrugge under practically continuous fire. This was impossible from the sea owing to the power and efficiency of the German coastal artillery, and to obtain the required fire from land batteries it would be necessary to advance our line considerably. MAP 15

The start of the great British attack, now known as the third Battle of Ypres, had been fixed for 31st July, and it was decided, presumably by the Supreme Civilian Authority—though each member of that body has probably since condemned the plan and blamed some wretched dead soldier for it—to combine with this attack an attempt to establish our heavy guns and howitzers within neutralising distance of Zeebrugge.

Briefly the plan was that the Second and Fifth Armies, which were carrying out the attack at Ypres, should capture the ridge running northward through Becelaere, Passchendaele and Westroosebeke to Staden; when this position had been gained, and the Fifth Army was ready to strike north-east from Staden, the 1st Division, in conjunction with an attack by the 15th Corps, which was holding the coastal sector, was to land between the German line and Ostend. It was hoped that the 1st Division would take the Coast Defence Batteries that were situated at Raversyde Bains, two miles west of Ostend, and by landing far enough in rear of the hostile trenches would render ineffective the artillery opposed to the 15th Corps. MAP 11

If complete success was gained, the constant bombardment of Zeebrugge from the land would be possible, while the capture of the batteries at Raversyde would help the Navy considerably in its attacks on the submarine bases; in addition the reoccupation of a large part of Belgium would have been made probable, to

say nothing of the help that would be given to our Allies, more than one of whom were in decidedly perilous circumstances. The plan had received a set-back by the loss of the trenches east of the Yser; with these trenches, too, had gone a mine that had been prepared for the destruction of the Grand Dune, the key of the enemy's landward coastal defences.

The 1st Division was well fitted to make the attempt. It had done little fighting or trench work since March, and the intervening months had been spent at training of a kind that would be valuable in such an enterprise. Officers and men were fit and were more used to one another than any British troops had been since the earliest days of the war; the Staffs knew their units, and the units had confidence in the Staff.

The landing would certainly be difficult, and success would largely depend on the exactness with which each stage of the operation was carried out; it was for this reason that the Division went into the camp on the dunes for special training. Secrecy was also essential, and it is really remarkable how secret the project had been kept. Probably, until the whole force was safely secluded, no one outside the Divisional Staff had the slightest idea of what was imminent; certainly battalion commanders were entirely in the dark, and not a soul in the 28th knew the whereabouts or duties of Major Smith's detachment until it rejoined at Le Clipon, where it had been at work since leaving the Regiment near Coxyde Bains.

The camp was surrounded by a strong fence which was constantly patrolled, and guards were posted at the entrance. The only horses inside were chargers and a few essential draught horses; all the internal transport work was done by means of a light railway. The transport was camped two miles away and daily brought rations, mails and other stores to the main entrance, where it dumped them and departed; then the goods were collected by the inmates. Theoretically at any rate, no one within the camp had any verbal communication with anyone outside. A rigorous censorship greatly delayed the dispatch of letters to England, thus imposing on battalion and company commanders endless correspondence with anxious relations of the men. All this was in the interests of secrecy; but to the detriment of secrecy though naturally to the delight of everyone, leave began on a large scale directly the Division had settled down. From the end of March until the entry into the "Hush

Camp"—the name was probably invented by its builders—the fighting done by the 28th had been negligible, yet the men got hardly any leave, and the majority had been eighteen months in France before their turn came; now, when apparently it was of vital importance to keep the Division isolated, leave was granted lavishly, and at the end of the period of detention the men were going to England within six months of their last visit. It is true that before he went each man was lectured by his C.O. on the dire effect that incautious talk might have on the success of the landing and on the safety of himself and his friends; nevertheless, human nature being what it is, there is no doubt that the affair was discussed all over England.

The plans for the undertaking had been prepared with both skill and care by the Admiralty, the Higher Military Command and, particularly, by the Divisional Staff. It was decided that each of the three brigades should make a separate landing, though not far apart, the right brigade at Westende Bains, the left at Middlekerke Bains and the other between these places. The right and centre brigades would be responsible for the hostile artillery—most of it situated about Westende Bains—that was engaged in holding the line; the left brigade was to send a flying column, composed of cyclists and a motor machine-gun battery supported by infantry and accompanied by sappers with explosives, to destroy the Raversyde batteries and to rejoin as soon as the job was finished. When each brigade had made good its landing it was to advance to the final objective and consolidate the position; the right brigade had to cross the Nieuport-Bruges Canal while that on the left had to go but a short distance from the coast. Strong patrols were then to seize the canal crossings and road junctions between Nieuport and Leffinghe and thus, since no formed body of troops moving across the waterlogged country south of the dune belt could leave the roads, to shepherd the retreating enemy southward and initiate the isolation of Ostend and even of Zeebrugge.

Each brigade would be accompanied by its trench-mortar battery and the following extra troops: one Field Company of Royal Engineers, one company of the Divisional Pioneer Battalion, one battery consisting of four eighteen-pounders and two four-five howitzers, one motor machine-gun battery, three tanks and two motor ambulances with a medical detachment. In addition the right brigade would have one cyclist company,

the centre brigade three cyclist companies and the left brigade a cyclist battalion. No horse transport was to land, and to each unit was allotted a number of hand-carts for water, tools, ammunition and supplies. The guns and limbers were to be man-handled, so they would not travel far. The transport of the Division was to move up close to the line and to join its units directly the 15th Corps had cleared the way.

The problems of the shallow water near the coast and the complete lack of inlets for harbourage were solved by the use of monitors as transports. These practically flat-bottomed ships could get quite near the shore, and though they were both vulnerable and slow, the weight of their armament—6- and 12-inch guns—would be useful. Even monitors, however, could not get close enough to enable a sufficiently rapid disembarkation, so the Naval Authorities devised a scheme whereby each brigade with its attached troops would be carried in a pair of monitors steaming abreast and pushing before them a structure called a "Pontoon," the rear end of which would be made fast between their bows. These pontoons were, in appearance, narrow wooden rafts, 200 yards long and 10 yards wide with a draught in front of $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet and in rear of $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet; steps led down to the rear end from each monitor. On the pontoons were to be carried the guns, motor machine-gun vehicles, bicycles, loaded hand-carts and the spare stores—too bulky for the hand-carts—that would be dumped on shore directly the troops had landed; right forward, ready to lead the way, would be the three tanks. Down the middle was a gangway 10 feet wide, along which the two leading battalions of the brigade would be arranged abreast, ready to follow the tanks. The remaining troops were to be equally divided between the monitors.

Surprise and therefore secrecy being of the first importance it was intended that the monitors and pontoons should arrive in Dunkirk docks, where the embarkation was to take place, during the night preceding it, and that the troops should go on board at dusk, though it would be necessary to load the stores and vehicles by daylight. The flotilla was to sail as soon as the troops were on board; the landing was timed for dawn next morning. Small craft producing a dense smoke cloud were to precede the monitors, and, to deceive the enemy, other little ships were to emit similar clouds all along the coast as far as the Dutch frontier. Under cover of this screen each pair of monitors would push its pontoon

ashore, having begun to bombard the buildings on the sea front when about 300 yards away, and as soon as the troops and stores were disembarked would cast off the pontoon and try to get out of range before the dispersal of the smoke revealed them to hostile artillery observers at Raversyde.

Directly the pontoons touched ground, the tanks were to drive straight up the sea wall followed by the two leading battalions, which, turning outwards on reaching the top, would occupy positions to protect the landing of the rest of the force, while two tanks dealt with such strong points as might endanger our footing ashore or interfere with our advance. The other two battalions would unload the guns, vehicles and stores that were immediately necessary, leaving the remainder to be dealt with by the pioneers; the third tank, equipped with winding gear, would be used to haul the guns and heavy vehicles up the wall. When all was ready the force would advance to the second objective, having detached the troops detailed for special jobs.

Besides the straightness of the coast and the shallowness of the water near it there were other important factors that would affect the landing. The sea wall just alluded to was a serious obstacle. It stretched for miles without a gap, and the esplanade on the top was more than thirty feet above the beach. The wall had a slope of 1 in 2; in some places it rose vertically for the last four feet and in others had an overhanging coping. At first it seemed almost insuperable; nevertheless adequate preparations were made to overcome it. Again, the attempt had to be made at dawn and at high tide, and in order that the smoke might blow shorewards a breeze off the sea was necessary, but the breeze must not be too strong lest the consequent rough water should make the landing impossible; thus a suitable day for the enterprise would rarely occur.

The great gamble never took place; not owing to lack of suitable conditions, though few days during the time spent in Le Clipon met all the requirements, but because the Fifth Army failed to make the necessary progress. It is difficult to appreciate the chances of success, though, given reasonable luck and the important element of surprise, a good case can be made out. The thoroughness of the training, the exact knowledge of everything he had to do possessed by each officer and man, the sudden onslaught in the early dawn, the tanks apparently crawling out of the sea from behind an impenetrable cloud of

black vapour that might conceal all manner of other horrors, the huge shells, fired at point blank range, roaring and smashing their way into the buildings on the sea front, the alarms and rumours caused by the simultaneous attack of the 15th Corps, the shortage of reserves brought about by the success of the Second and Fifth Armies: all these combined might well have produced success. On the other hand the operation was certainly hazardous; even given perfect conditions and complete surprise, the number of possible accidents, any one of which might result in failure, was considerable. Had it failed, it would have done so with such a bump that the memoir writers would have been able to gibber about it for many years to come. The general opinion of both officers and men in the Division was favourable to the undertaking, and many were disappointed when it was abandoned; at all events it would have been a change from the ordinary way of going over the top. It was at first expected that everything would be ready about the middle of August, by which time the troops in Le Clipon would have done a month's training; the attempt, having been several times postponed owing to the situation on the Passchendaele Ridge, was finally given up in October, and thus the 1st Division enjoyed itself at the seaside for 95 days while most other people were less agreeably employed at the third Battle of Ypres.

The camp was pleasantly situated among the dunes, close to the beach, over whose great expanses of firm yellow sand the tides ebbed and flowed with amazing speed. Each unit had ample room to move about in and plenty of tents. The whole enclosure covered a large area and in spite of camouflage must have been easy to see from the air. On moonlit nights the enemy did a deal of bombing, and although Dunkirk was often on fire, the only hit scored against the camp was on a tent occupied by men of the Cameron Highlanders.

The scenery—sand, grass, sky and sea—was ordinarily not entrancing, but on a still night, with the moon spreading a shining path across the sea to the horizon and making the little waves glitter as they broke on the shore, it was certainly beautiful.

At first the weather was good, but after a very wet period in August the rest of the month was stormy. Early September was pleasantly warm, and after another rainy spell the remainder and the first day or two of October were perfect, with hot

sunshine and balmy air; then, till the Division set off on its travels again, there was much rain accompanied by cold gales.

Everyone in the camp lived strenuously. For the 28th the day's training generally began with battalion drill on the shore before breakfast and continued afterwards till about 1.30 p.m.; then, if the weather was suitable, a bathing parade preceded the midday meal. A rest period followed the men's dinners, and since General McCalmont realised the important part that physical fitness would play in the coming enterprise the afternoon and evening were devoted to the sports that were most likely to improve the speed, strength and stamina of all ranks. The routine was varied when brigades or the whole division went out of camp to practise for the various situations that might occur after the advance inland had begun. On these excursions and when route marching took place it was enjoyable to leave the sandhills and to see fields—their corn cut and stooked but still uncarried even in October—villages and towns again; some of the latter, such as Bourbourg and Gravelines, were picturesque old places, encircled by moats and ancient walls.

The early morning drill not only improved the smartness of the battalion but also curbed the spirits of the young officers by ensuring early rising; its good results were evident when at the various ceremonial parades that took place the 28th moved proudly on to its markers in close column. Work after breakfast generally consisted in practising embarkation, disembarkation and the ascent of the sea wall; it was immensely important that all these should be carried out with speed and orderliness. Full-sized plans of the monitors and pontoons, showing the spaces available for troops and stores, were marked out on the sand; all concerned were then exercised in getting into their places, and, after an imaginary voyage, in disembarking. By constant practice the time required to clear a pair of monitors and a pontoon was reduced to about ten minutes. The architect of the real sea wall supervised the erection of an exact copy in the camp, and this was scaled daily by every officer and man about to take part in the landing. It was difficult for a laden man to get to the top, and the slippings and slitherings of the less agile were considerable; however, valuable information as to the best method of ascent was gained from their struggles, and most people improved with practice. The chief lesson learnt was that

sharp new nails made the climb comparatively easy; consequently regimental arrangements were made to renail all boots immediately before the embarkation. A similar wall had been erected at the Central Tank Workshops at St. Pol, and one day commanding officers were taken there to see the tanks climb the wall. The unwieldy looking brutes went up with surprising ease, the coping being overcome by means of a wooden block carried in front of the tank and lowered into the hollow space when the top of the wall was reached. Those who tried the climb inside a tank did not find it comfortable. The tanks with haulage duties carried a wooden ramp to let down over the face of the wall to guide the wheels of guns and vehicles. On another occasion Brigadiers and Battalion Commanders were sent in a destroyer to the mouth of the Medway where the fleet of monitors was anchored, and in order to make the acquaintance of the naval personnel and to learn something of the method of transportation, the officers of each brigade stayed two nights on the ships to which their units were allotted. During the visit the pontoons were lashed in position, and each pair of monitors steamed some distance, pushing its raft before it. The crews of the monitors were kept entirely isolated; their only visitor was the destroyer that brought our rations; they got no leave.

One other means of training, a model of the scene of action showing every building and all the features of the country, was housed in a long shed near the entrance to the camp. It was believed to be extremely accurate and had been prepared from maps, pre-war photographs and coloured postcards, and from aerial photographs. Actually only a few senior officers ever saw it, but the intention was that before embarkation it should be explained to every member of the force with reference to the action of his immediate unit, so that he should know exactly what to do on reaching the top of the wall.

Most of the troops enjoyed the bathing parades; the flat beach ensured safety, though swimmers had to wade a long way before reaching deep water. One parade was interfered with by jelly fish, and consequently about half the battalion spent an unhappy afternoon; contact with these beasts caused intense discomfort, and the victims were unable to stay still for a moment until the effect wore off. The best cure appeared to be a good sweat; those members of the rugby team who were affected were almost cured after an hour's practice in the hot sun.

Among the afternoon's amusements was the inter-section soccer tournament that had begun at the end of May; it finished on 10th August with the victory of No. 4 Section of "C" Company, after playing extra time against a section of "D," by a goal to nothing. The regimental sports began on 8th August and were spread over a long period; in fact, it was after the middle of September before they came to an end. As in 1916 the number of entries was large; there were 27 heats in the first round of the 100 yards race, over 50 entries for the high jump and 100 for the cross-country race. "D" Company again won the cup. A regimental boxing meeting lasted three days, and on the final afternoon fighting went on for six hours. Brigade and regimental boxing tournaments were incessant, and those qualified and willing to referee and judge were kept busy.

Much football of both kinds was played. Soccer grounds were plentiful, but to discover one soft enough for rugby was not easy. Finally a level marshy bit of ground inside the dunes was used; except on a really wet day it proved an excellent pitch. It is surprising how much better one plays rugby in summer than in winter, provided the ground is not too hard. General Strickland gave cups for both games. At soccer the Regiment beat 3rd Brigade Headquarters by 8 goals to 1, the South Wales Borderers by 2 to nothing and the Munsters by 3 to 2, thus winning the Brigade competition; the semi-final against the Loyal North Lancashire, representing the 2nd Brigade, was lost by 4 goals to 2. The 2nd Welch, 6th Welch, South Wales Borderers, 10th Gloucestershire and 60th Rifles all had excellent rugby sides. The 28th won the brigade competition, beating the Machine Gun Company by 21 points to 0, the 2nd Welch by 6 points to 0 and the South Wales Borderers by 13 points to 0; in the semi-final the 2nd/60th was beaten by 13 points to 0. The camp broke up before the final against the 6th Welch could be played; from the form shown by the teams it is reasonable to suppose that the 28th would have won. A match with the 6th Welch for the cup took place in the summer of 1918 at which time both sides were out of practice, and the 28th had lost half its team; it also lost the match. Numerous second XV matches and inter-company games were played; the signallers and scouts had promising teams. The 28th certainly possessed an outstanding XV, probably as good as any it had ever had. The match against the 60th was the seventeenth and last played during

1917; all were won, and a single try was the only score against the Regiment. The team was: Back, Private Miller; three-quarters, Lance-Corporal Roe, Private Lugg, Lieutenant Green, Captain Baxter; halves, Sergeant Corbett, Private Sheppard; forwards, Captain Seldon, Quartermaster-Sergeant Nash, Private Davis, Corporal Leahy, Sergeant Armitage, Corporal Giles, Private Wheeler, Lieutenant-Colonel Pagan. Private Miller, an exceptional back, Colonel Pagan and Sergeant Armitage were relics of the 61st side that won the Army Cup. Lance-Corporal Roe and Private Lugg, both Special Reserve recruits when the war began, were sound players. Lieutenant Green, a converted soccer player, soon became a brilliant three-quarter, and Captain Baxter was a fast wing player. Sergeant Corbett was useful at stand-off half, while Private Sheppard was probably the best scrum half in France. Of the forwards: Quartermaster-Sergeant Nash and Corporal Giles had been mainstays of the 28th XV before the war; Private Davis and Corporal Leahy, both new army men, were brilliant players; Captain Seldon, another reformed soccer player, was fast and lusty, and Private Wheeler played a solid, unobtrusive game. Two excellent forwards had been lost when Captain Lavender and Lieutenant Clayton were hit at Nieuport.

Throughout the stay at Le Clipon the Brigadier had laid continual stress on the importance of physical fitness, and towards the end of the time he decided to test his battalions in a new kind of cross-country race. Its conditions were that the first man home gained one point for his regiment and that every runner whose time was not more than a quarter greater than that of the first man made a like score; the unit whose points were highest in proportion to its ration strength won the race. The course was only about four miles long, but the going, over the dunes and for a considerable distance through two or three inches of water, was heavy. Owing to the enormous entries—in the 28th only two officers and a couple of dozen men failed to turn out—the race was run in heats. On 16th October the Munsters easily beat the 2nd Welch, and the 28th beat the South Wales Borderers, narrowly, by 185 points to 178. There appeared to be no chance of victory for the Regiment in the final, run on 19th October, for the Royal Munster Fusiliers was a famous running regiment, and the 28th was not. However, though the race was run a minute and a half faster than that

against the South Wales Borderers and 13 out of the first 14 to finish were Munsters, the Regiment won by 175 points to 169. Both the South Wales Borderers and the Munsters were numerically stronger than the 28th so there was no need to calculate percentages.

Four Second-Lieutenants and 71 men joined the Regiment in 19 different batches during the stay at Le Clipon, and certain changes occurred in the duties of the officers already there. Lieutenant M. A. Green went to the 3rd Brigade as Staff Captain, and then, after a short period as a "learner," became a brigade major in the 32nd Division; he had been adjutant for more than a year with excellent results, and everyone was sorry when he went away. Lieutenant J. Stevenson succeeded him. Captain A. Seldon was in command of "D" Company in place of Captain Lavender. Parties of officers and sailors from the monitors visited the camp from time to time as guests of the regiments and appeared to find the change agreeable; some of them went to visit the Ypres battlefield. Another visitor was the commander of an American division; he stayed for twenty-four hours, and it was interesting to observe the customs and to learn the views of this leader of our new allies.

The camp began to break up during the third week in October, and the Regiment moved off on the 20th; time had gone quickly at Le Clipon, and no one wished to leave the quiet spot to start once more into the unknown, with the prospect of the fourth winter of war before him.

NOTE.—The details for the proposed landing are taken from an article in the *Royal Engineers' Journal* of June 1924, written by Colonel (now Major-General) W. G. S. Dobbie, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. General Dobbie was G.S.O.1 of the 1st Division during the training for the adventure and for a long time both before and afterwards.

CHAPTER XII

ATTACK ON THE GOUDBERG SPUR

ON 20th October the Regiment moved out of Le Clipon Camp in the morning and went to the village of Eringhem, about nine miles south of Dunkirk, by way of Boomstraete, Spicker, Grand Millebrugghe and Le Hieppe. A lovely day made the march enjoyable, and the flat well-tilled country, intersected by canals and wide drainage ditches, looked charming in the bright October sunshine; the journey helped to unstiffen the muscles of those who had not recovered from their cross-country efforts on the previous afternoon, and the cure was completed by a good night's rest in comfortable billets. Next morning the move southward continued, and billets in and around the village of Rubrouck, four miles from Eringhem, were reached soon after midday. Here a four days' halt was made, and a considerable amount of training and route marching was done in pleasant weather. The farms in this neighbourhood were not collected into villages like they were on the Somme, but stood each on its own land; the country south of Rubrouck was dotted with these scattered homesteads, where the threshing was in full swing, and it was instructive to watch how successfully the workers—women, children and aged men—competed with the task. The men got baths on the 22nd; on the 24th the Brigadier presented a cup for the cross-country race to the Battalion on parade, and his remarks proved that he appreciated the effort made in winning it.

On the 25th the move continued, and the Regiment marched through Zeggars-Cappel, Esquelbecq, Wormhoudt and Herzele to billets south of Houtkerke, close to the Bois St. Acaire. The day was bright with a cold gale from the west; the wind was an advantage for it dried the roads, and being behind them helped the troops on their sixteen miles march. The billets were good, and except for two wet days the weather was excellent for the time of year, with plenty of sunshine. Good training, on which the Major-General kept a sharp eye, went on in the mornings; among other things, the officers were exercised in

compass marching in the Bois St. Acaire, not because it was expected that they were about to traverse woods, but because this one, by reason of its thickness, afforded such an opportunity of practice. There were frequent brigade conferences in the evenings at Houtkerke. Company and platoon soccer matches were played in the afternoons, and one day the servants and orderlies beat the officers at rugby. Another day Colonel W. P. S. Foord visited the 28th, which he had not seen since he was wounded at Givenchy in January 1915. He was in command of the 14th Battalion of the Regiment and had recently done a notable attack near the Houthulst Forest for which he and his battalion had been congratulated on parade by the Commander of the Fifth Army, an uncommon occurrence; General Gough's addresses to C.Os. and Brigadiers were not complimentary as a rule. There was a large aerodrome close to the 28th's billets; its hangars were used for church parades, and its juvenile officers—captains and majors who looked about fifteen years old—were very friendly. Altogether the time went pleasantly.

However, less pleasant things were on the way. The constant assembly of C.Os. at Brigade Headquarters was ominous, and the news that the 1st Division was about to go to war again was gradually divulged.

The third Battle of Ypres had gone on steadily since 31st July. The attacks had been persistently handicapped by the weather, but until the middle of October progress had been steady though slow, and a considerable gain of ground had been made. The casualties had been very heavy owing both to the strength of the enemy's concrete fortifications, which, disposed in great depth, were cleverly sited, and to the difficulty of the waterlogged ground.

The events of the spring, summer and autumn had resulted in most of our allies being in perilous circumstances. The Russians had altogether failed. The Italians had been routed by the Austrians aided by a few German troops; in fact, but for a reinforcement of several French and British divisions, hurriedly transferred from France, they would probably have retired from the contest. The French had suffered enormous casualties in ill-considered attacks during the spring; these losses, together with the consequent mutiny, made their armies incapable of offensive action and unreliable in defence. The hardly-used Belgians had been more or less withdrawn from the combat

during the summer, though now they were rapidly regaining their power. Thus the British army had to bear the brunt of the war during the greater part of the year.

By his sustained attacks—at Arras, Messines, Ypres and Cambrai—Lord Haig succeeded in the tremendous task set him by those responsible for the allied policy, namely: to compel the enemy to employ the mass of his forces against the British front, thus giving those of our allies who were still competing a chance of recovery. Any relaxation of the pressure maintained by Lord Haig on the Germans throughout the year would probably have resulted in their laying the foundations of victory before its end.

The disparagement of the British Commander-in-Chief by some of these accountable statesmen, in their memoirs, is therefore unfortunate. The principal charge laid against him is based on the losses incurred, particularly those at Passchendaele. It must be remembered, however, that not only did the operations protect our weakened allies, but they also inflicted on the enemy losses not appreciably smaller than our own.

But for the Caporetto failure, it would have been possible to abandon the third Battle of Ypres before the end of October, and the 1st Division could then have been used, together with those that were sent to Italy, in the November attack near Cambrai, where their presence might have brought success; actually the Division was required for the final attacks at Passchendaele and therefore had to plunge into the hopeless morass before the ridge, an unhappy fate for the unit that was probably fitter and better trained than any other of our army.

On 5th November the C.O. had to take over the 3rd Brigade owing to the illness of the Brigadier. While the Regiment was at Le Clipon, Major Smith had been succeeded as second-in-command by Captain Baxter, and the latter, when he went to the Senior Officers' School in October, was replaced by Captain B. R. Brewin, an attached officer; finally Major N. A. B. Baillie-Hamilton, of the Black Watch, was attached to the Battalion on 2nd November and commanded during the temporary absence of the C.O., with Captain Brewin as senior major. It is remarkable that during the war only for this period of twelve days was the 28th commanded by an officer outside the Regiment.

Passchendaele was already in our hands, and the operation in which the 1st Division now became involved was an attempt, in

conjunction with a Canadian Division on the right, to capture a number of fortified houses and pill-boxes on the Goudberg Spur, which ran south-west from the ridge, north of the village; MAP 12
 the attack, if successful, would add nearly a mile of the coveted crest to the part already gained.

The 1st Division replaced the 63rd Division in the line; the 3rd Brigade, which was to carry out the attack, relieved the forward troops on the right, and the 60th Rifles of the 2nd Brigade occupied the left of the Divisional front. On 6th November the 28th went to Dambré Camp, about a mile north of MAP 11
 Vlamertinghe; next day the 2nd Welch took over the line opposite the Goudberg Spur, the 28th moved up in support MAP 12
 and the South Wales Borderers and Munsters went to Irish Farm. The Regiment moved by the road through Ypres, St. MAP 11
 Jean and Wieltje as far as the crossing of the Ypres–Westroosebeke and the Langemarck–Zonnebeke roads and thence by a duck- MAP 12
 board track to the group of pill-boxes, known as Kronprinz Farm, that lay in the low ground nearly two miles west of Passchendaele. Headquarters was lodged in the pill-boxes with the companies grouped around in derelict shelters and trenches. The Welch Headquarters was at Inch Houses, half a mile farther on, and the companies in the line held a variety of dilapidated posts and pill-boxes in the still lower ground at the foot of the ridge.

The country traversed by the two battalions on their way forward and the region that was occupied on arrival were utterly desolate. Scattered bricks, flung abroad by shell fire and spread untidily over the ground, were all that remained of the villages of St. Jean and Wieltje. Incessant bombardment had broken down the banks of the little water-courses—the Steenbeek, Stroombeek, Lekkerboterbeek and Paddebeek—that drained MAP 11
 the land, and the countryside was one great mudflat, pitted with thousands of shell-holes and intersected by wide morasses that once were rivulets. Both November sky and miry earth were leaden grey in hue, without the faintest trace of colour; the eye craved for relief from the perpetual monotony. The ridge in front gave little impression of height; the outstanding feature of the landscape was a large oblong pill-box—its name long since forgotten—set on a slight rise between the courses of the Stroombeek and the Paddebeek; it caught the eye from every part of the divisional front.

The area was only traversable by means of duckboard tracks

and the Ypres-Wieltje-Westroosebeke road, for it was impossible otherwise to cross the slough. The principal track, named Mousetrap, led from the canal to the front line near the hamlet of Wallemolen and ran on the north side of the road; several subsidiary tracks existed in the forward area.

The general direction of the attack was due north; the advance was timed to start at 6.5 a.m. on 10th November. In order to occupy the part of the ridge allotted to the 3rd Brigade, two groups of pill-boxes had to be captured. That on the right—MAP 12 Virtue, Virile, Vocation, Vox and Void Farms,* roughly in a line from south to north in the order named—lay about a mile north-west of Passchendaele; that on the left, half a mile farther west, consisted of Tournant Farm, Vat Cottages and Veal Cottage, commencing from the south. The final objective ran from Void Farm to Veal Cottage and then back towards our line to Tournant Farm; there was a space of about 500 yards between Void and Veal and of half a mile between Veal and Tournant. Our line on the front of the attack ran from Valour Farm on the right, through Vanity and Vapour Farms, to a point 200 yards north of Source Farm on the left.

The ground to be crossed in the advance was covered with thick slime, and in the centre, stretching from Vapour Farm to the Goudberg Copse, 600 yards north-east of it, was an impassable morass, 150 yards wide, formed by the overflowing Paddebeek stream. The left of the attack would be exposed to enfilade fire from three hostile pill-boxes situated a couple of hundred yards north-west of Tournant Farm.

These factors made the operation difficult to plan, and only after much reflection were the following arrangements made. The 1st South Wales Borderers was to attack from a line immediately west of Vapour Farm and to take the pill-boxes of the right group, in succession, as they were reached. On the left the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers, formed up in two bodies at an angle to each other in front of Source Farm, was to send one company westward against Tournant and another northward against Vat and Veal; the remaining companies were to be held in support and finally used to fill the gap between the pill-boxes. Touch was to be gained all along the line after the capture of the farthest objective. The Trench Mortar Battery,

* Their queer names had been given to the pill-boxes, on our maps, for identification purposes.

from a position near Source Farm, was to deal with the enfilading pill-boxes on the left, and the Machine Gun Company was to add a barrage to that of the Artillery. The 2nd Welch, having held the forward posts in abominable conditions for four days, would certainly be unfit to attack and was therefore to stay in the line; the 28th was to be held in reserve at Kronprinz Farm. The plan would result in two distinct attacks separated by the Paddebeek swamp: an unsound operation, but inevitable owing to the difficulties of the terrain.

The weather on 9th November was fine, though threatening; rain set in at night and continued without a break throughout the 10th. The attacking battalions moved up from Irish Farm on the evening of the 9th, the South Wales Borderers by the road from Ypres to Meetcheele and thence by a duckboard track to Valour Farm, the Munsters by Mousetrap Track; the 28th picketed the latter throughout its length to prevent the Fusiliers taking a wrong turning. The South Wales Borderers started at 5.50 p.m. and were in position at 4.45 a.m. on the 10th; the Munsters were formed up by 4.15 a.m., after a journey of eleven hours; neither march was seriously interfered with by the enemy's guns.

The advance started punctually, and despite pouring rain and difficult going, the attackers made good progress; bad weather prevented aerial reconnaissance, but soon after daylight artillery observers reported our troops on the top of the ridge on the left, and a little later, batches of prisoners, sent back by the Munsters, began to arrive at Brigade Headquarters at Kansas Cross, a pill-box near the beginning of the track from the road to Kronprinz Farm. On the right the South Wales Borderers lost direction, and although the leading platoons got on steadily, they reached the limit of the advance in the territory of the Canadians on their right and failed to capture the pill-boxes that were their own objectives.

Flying had been impossible for some days before the attack, so there was practically no counter-battery work on our part; consequently as soon as the enemy was aware of the situation, very heavy shelling began on both flanks and continued with increasing severity till the evening. The effect of this fire caused the assaulting battalions to give ground and to call for assistance. Accordingly the 28th was ordered to reinforce, and by 11 a.m. the whole battalion had been dispatched; "D" Company moved

up through Wallemolen to help the Munsters, and "A," followed by "B" and "C," went to the aid of the South Wales Borderers. Progress was slow, for the rain had made the duckboards slippery, and "A," "B" and "C" Companies had to make a long detour to get to Valour Farm. When the reinforcing companies reached them, both the South Wales Borderers and Munsters were, to all intents, back where they started. "D" Company, moving through a hurricane of shells towards Tournant Farm, at once came under fire from the pill-boxes to the north-west of it, which the Trench Mortar Battery had failed to deal with; dispositions were made to attack both farm and pill-boxes, but the quickly falling darkness prevented the attempt, and a line just south of Tournant was occupied for the night. The remaining companies took over the positions held by the South Wales Borderers, with "B" Company forward and "A" and "C" in support. The line finally occupied was but little in front of our original posts, with a gap, half a mile across, in the middle. Owing to the evil conditions it was impossible to gain touch that night, but fortunately the enemy was equally quiescent; next morning, after much patrolling, touch was gained, and by the time that the Regiment was relieved by the Loyal North Lancashire the gap had been filled, and the line was adequately held.

After the relief, dugouts in the Canal Bank, close to Ypres, were reached early on the morning of 12th November, and on the 13th the 28th moved to a tented camp at Dambré Farm; this was hardly an ideal residence in mid-November, but it seemed of more than earthly excellence after the discomforts of the preceding week.

That it was necessary for the 3rd Brigade to hold the line during the period immediately before the battle is regrettable for several reasons: the attacking strength was reduced by the loss of the 2nd Welch, and the efficiency of the other forward troops was impaired by fatigue; the tiny pill-box at Kansas Cross, in which the Brigade Staff had to make the plans and write the orders for the operation as well as to administer the line, was quite inadequate, though it certainly resisted the occasional direct hits scored by hostile guns; the assaulting battalions, waiting at Irish Farm, were over four miles from Brigade Headquarters, and those in the line were hardly more accessible. During the actual fighting, the immobility imposed on the troops by weather and ground, the narrowness of the

battlefield which let the enemy use against it, from either flank, innumerable batteries that had nothing to shoot at on their own fronts, the absence of counter-battery fire with which to subdue the hostile guns, the lack of aerial reconnaissance and the awkwardness of the advance were all obstacles to success. Yet, making allowance for every difficulty, the 3rd Brigade had little reason to be proud of its deeds; the 1st and 2nd Brigades occupied the greater part of the objective, a little bit at a time, before the Division left the line.

The loss suffered by the Regiment was not heavy. Second-Lieutenant C. R. Harman was killed; Captain Priestley died of his wounds on the day after the battle; Colonel Pagan, Captain Brewin, Lieutenant Davis and Captain George were wounded. Seven N.C.Os. and men were killed, and 42 were wounded. Captain Priestley, who had commanded "C" Company admirably since May, was a most promising officer and a good leader of men. No. 8440 Sergeant T. Birch and No. 8725 Private Wainwright were among those killed; both had done outstanding service in the war.

The stay at Dambré Farm lasted till 23rd November; the time was spent at training and in improving the amenities of the camp. Here the Regiment first experienced the projectiles, thrown by long-range high-velocity guns, that the Germans were now using against our countless standing camps; this nuisance, which continued until stationary warfare ceased, was prolific in casualties. Two men were killed on the 17th when a shell hit their tent directly; one of them, a signaller named Bird, had done excellent work for the 28th for nearly two years. Colonel Pagan took over from Major Hamilton on the 16th, and the latter, who had commanded most efficiently during a difficult period, went soon afterwards to Divisional Headquarters. On the 18th "A" and "C" Companies moved to Wurst Farm, about a mile west of Kronprinz Farm, in support of the 1st Brigade; on the 20th they were replaced by "B" and "D" Companies.

CHAPTER XIII

WINTER NEAR YPRES—THE HOUTHULST FOREST— POELCAPPELLE

MAP 11 FOR the next three weeks the 28th toured the camps that lay west and north-west of Ypres, and, except those consisting wholly or partly of tents, found them comfortable resting places. Some were collections of dugouts and shelters—often situated in the ruins of a wood—that had been used before the enemy was driven away from the Yser Canal; others, composed of substantial wooden huts equipped with wire beds, had been built after the German withdrawal; the former type was often the more agreeable. Leave, though not so prolific as in the late summer, was still regular, and the men were getting home every six months; rations were good, adequate supplies were obtainable from the field force canteens, and bathing arrangements were excellent; altogether the fourth winter of the war promised well.

Going on leave was a chilly proceeding except for those fortunate enough to travel by road, for the slow trains, with most of their windows broken, were icily cold; on the return journey travellers had to change trains at Hazebrouck about 3 a.m. and were turned out of their carriages by ill-mannered Military Policemen of the Railway Staff, whose methods, though they might have been ignored when one was homeward bound, were certainly intolerable on the way back. There were even drawbacks to the journey by car. On one occasion a leave-goer begged a lift to Dunkirk from an officer of the Naval Air Service, whose car he found in the square at Poperinghe, and the latter's hospitality extended to tea in his mess on arrival, for knowing, as he thought, the hour at which the train for Calais left, he was satisfied that there was ample time for the meal. However, the railway authorities had altered their time-table on the previous day and had kept the change a secret. Accordingly the victim spent a night in Dunkirk, at that time darker than darkest London, and lost a day's leave into the bargain.

On 23rd November the Regiment left Dambré Farm in the morning and went to Schools Camp, just over a mile west of

Poperinghe, by way of Vlamertinghe and the North Switch Road which was a kind of "by-pass" of Poperinghe. The site of the camp had once been a good-sized covert. The men got baths, and as no training took place, the chance of overhauling clothing, boots and equipment was fully used. The next move—to Proosdy Camp which lay north of Proven—was made along the Proven road on the 27th. The camp was uncomfortable, for many tents were mixed with its draughty huts, and the weather was chilly. Some route marching and other training were done, but little else happened. On 5th December the Regiment marched a few miles eastward, on a fine and frosty day, to Eikhoek Camp which lay north-west of Woesten, close to the Poperinghe Canal, and consisted of good huts containing wire beds; the officers were in cubicles in a large hut, with one or two in tents. This excellent place was occupied for two nights, on both of which the enemy, unsuccessfully, tried to bomb it. Our searchlights came into action on both occasions and added a new and beautiful firework display to the 28th's already varied experience of such spectacles. Everyone turned out to watch the hostile aeroplanes which gleamed silverily in the beams of a dozen lights; the anti-aircraft guns, however, failed to get a hit.

On 7th December the eastward move continued, but only for a couple of miles; at the end of the march the 28th occupied La Bergerie Camp, north-east of Woesten, and remained there for several days. The camp was a delightful collection of huts and dugouts, each different in shape and size, scattered higgledy-piggledy over a large area in a battered wood; most of the buildings were warm and comfortable. Gentle training was done in variable weather; rain followed sunshine, and frost succeeded rain. On Sunday, 9th December, the men had baths, and a camp and kit inspection was held. About this time Brigadier-General R. Barnett-Barker of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry succeeded General McCalmont; the loss of the latter was a blow to everyone, for never had a unit been better commanded than the 3rd Brigade by him.

The 1st Division now held the line south of the Houthulst Forest. On 8th December the C.O. and the Company Commanders visited this area at an unearthly hour of the morning, and soon afterwards the Regiment moved forward. The main road from Dixmude to Ypres crossed the Yser Canal at Steen-

straate and ran along its western side. About a thousand yards south of this crossing, near a ruin called "The Lock Keeper's House," a bridge had been thrown over the canal, and a road made connecting this bridge with the main road; access was thus gained to a track on the eastern bank, which ultimately led to the village of Houthulst, away beyond the forest. The reserve positions near the eastern bank of the canal, which the 28th took over from the 8th Royal Berkshire on 11th December, lay on either side of this track, which was the main line of communication for the divisional front.

MAP 13 Battalion Headquarters was at Boche cross-roads, about a mile from the canal, and the shady fir woods—Charpentier, Triangular and Tilleul—that surrounded it grew on sandy soil, so that the company lying near Headquarters was reasonably comfortable. Another company had good lodgings in dugouts and shelters on the canal bank, close to the bridge, but the remaining pair, in Woods 14 and 16, a little farther south, were not so well off, for the soil in the woods was clay, and being pitted with water-logged shell-holes, had churned up into deep mud of incredible stickiness; in addition, some of the battered pill-boxes in which the men lived were inches deep in water. The officers of Headquarters had a pill-box so tiny that no one could move without knocking something over; if the door was shut, one suffocated, and if it was open, one froze. The reserve position was only occupied for one night, and on the evening of 12th December the 10th Gloucestershire was relieved in the line.

The ground between the canal and our foremost positions had endured terrific shelling during the autumn advance, and the banks of the streams that traversed it had been destroyed; consequently the whole area was a vast swamp, and trenches being impossible, the defences consisted almost entirely of German pill-boxes, adapted to our needs; the position had considerable depth, but there were no continuous lines. The ground was only passable by means of duckboard tracks and by the road leading from the Lock Keeper's House bridge. There were ample duckboard tracks, which were carried over the numerous inundations by queer wooden bridges; one of these, Barleux Bridge, which crossed the floods about the junction of the Steenbeek and the Broenbeek, was more than 500 yards long.

MAP 11 The position held by the Division extended from a point about 500 yards east of the Langemarck-Koekuit-Clercken

road, on the right, to the valley of the Corverbeek, a narrow wooded gully, on the left; the Corverbeek was the point of junction of the British and Belgian armies. The 28th held the left sector: that from Mangelaare to the Corverbeek.

The line was held with two companies in front, one in support and one in reserve. Each of the forward companies had two platoons in section posts, which formed the outpost line and lay two or three hundred yards from the edge of the wood. Owing to the low swampy ground on which the posts stood and to their exposed position, which prevented all movement by day, and to their lack of size and shelter, the occupants endured considerable discomfort. The main line of resistance consisted of massive pill-boxes, 500 yards behind the outpost line. The right company ("A") had its headquarters at Houchard Farm, with one platoon at Mangelaare. Headquarters and two platoons of the left company ("D") were at Papegoed Farm, on the edge of the Corverbeek ravine. Owing to the fact that the defences had to be adapted to the existing pill-boxes Headquarters and one platoon of the support company ("C") were at Friant Farm, between and practically in line with Houchard and Papegoed. All these groups of pill-boxes were weatherproof, warm and spacious; therefore it was possible, by means of frequent inter-platoon reliefs, to lessen the hardships imposed by the inadequacy of the forward posts.

MAP 13

Behind the front line were three more groups of pill-boxes, more or less in line: on the right, Catinat Farm, where were stationed one platoon of the support company and a detachment of Headquarter signallers; in the centre, Island Post, containing the Headquarters of the reserve company ("B"); on the left, Victory Farm, containing two platoons of the reserve company. Still farther to the rear and again practically in line, were Mondovi Farm, the lodging of Battalion Headquarters, on the right, and Gourbi Farm, which housed the remaining platoons of the support and reserve companies, on the left. All these posts were quite habitable. Mondovi stood on a slight eminence in the middle of a wide inundation, and its massive concrete pile, rising from the waters and accessible only by the bridges that spanned them, gave the impression of a mediæval fortress; it was a wonderful place with an abundance of comfortable quarters, built with sandbags against its walls.

Considering the state of the ground the communications were

excellent. The transport brought up rations and stores by the road from the Lock Keeper's House as far as *Carrée de Londres*, a cross-roads quite three miles from the canal bridge and 800 yards north of Mondovi, and distribution was easy owing to the excellent system of duckboard tracks, which led in every direction. The ground rose very gently from the canal to the neighbourhood of the Kortekeer Cabaret, famous in the battles of 1914, and then fell more abruptly to the floods around Mondovi, rising again from Mondovi Wood to Catinat and then falling gradually to the forward posts.

The positions of the German posts were not located, in spite of constant patrolling; hostile patrols never approached our lines. On the night of 15th December a strong fighting patrol, commanded by Captain Smith, explored the neighbourhood of Surcouff Farm, and although it lay in ambush for a considerable time after its explorations, not one of the enemy was met; Houart Farm was examined on two evenings without success. Yet on normal occasions there were certainly hostile posts not far from ours. For example: one dark night, an officer, feeling his way cautiously towards the forward posts from Friant, dropped his pipe into a brook that flowed down the slope and switched on his torch to aid its recovery; immediately the cry, "Put that bloody light out," which always greeted even a spark anywhere near the front line, arose on all sides, and from over the way other cries in German, which doubtless had the same meaning, echoed back. Again, Belgian patrols on our left twice brought prisoners out of the wood.

The weather was cold and dry—there were hardish frosts on the last two nights—yet the health of the troops, despite the exposure that many of them endured, was excellent. Frost was certainly preferable to rain in the conditions; one of its minor benefits was the increased visibility of the duckboards at night owing to the frozen mist that overlaid them. There were no casualties during the four days that the line was held; such luck had not been known since the summer of 1915 at Le Rutoire. Hostile shelling was slight, and except for occasional machine-gun bursts directed at night at various points on the duckboards, small-arms fire never occurred. Altogether, for winter trenches, the conditions were excellent, and the position, with its posts in depth instead of continuous lines, its lakes, bridges, woods and varied means of communication, was of great interest. To visit

all the groups of pill-boxes took most of the daylight hours, and much of the night could be spent among the forward posts, whose occupants emerged at dark and to restore their circulation after a day of numbed quiescence worked vigorously at the improvement of their little forts, particularly at the wire.

On 16th December the 28th was relieved by the Munster Fusiliers and withdrew to the support positions near the canal; the officers of Headquarters went to their horrid little pill-box, and the companies returned to their former billets. The frost continued with increased severity, covering the shell-holes with ice hard enough to slide on and drying up the ground nicely; the hard ground and dry air were appreciated by the members of the large fatigue parties required nightly of the battalion to carry wire and other stores from the Carrée de Londres to the forward posts. It was often late when they got home, but owing to the excellence of the rations and the skill and endeavour of the cooks there was always a good meal awaiting them. A well-found soup kitchen, where working parties could stop for refreshment, was run near the Kortekeer Cabaret by the Reverend A. W. M. Cassan who for more than two years had done remarkable work with the 1st Division. On the 19th the Regiment went back to huts at Reninghoe Camp, about a mile north of Woesten, MAP 11 and the day after moved to Chauny Camp, 500 yards north of Crombeke; for a little way the route to the latter place followed the Ypres-Furnes road and after turning right-handed past Eikhoeck Camp zigzagged north-westward by various lanes. Both Reninghoe and Chauny were quite comfortable, and the frosty weather was good for marching.

On the 21st the Regiment retraced its steps and came to Zuidhuis Camp, which lay just south of Eikhoeck. Zuidhuis was amply equipped with excellent huts, and the week that the 28th spent there passed very pleasantly, the more so owing to the dry frosty weather and frequent sunshine. There was a heavy fall of snow on 26th December, and several days were foggy, but the ground remained hard, and this, in these winter Flanders camps, mattered most of all. Frost and fog covered the trees of the broken woods around the camp with rime, and the sunshine made them beautiful. The enemy was quiet, though one night he tried to hit the camp with bombs. The men thoroughly enjoyed their Christmas dinners on 25th December; as usual every kind of good thing had been sent

by friends at home, together with sufficient money to buy a great supply of turkeys and beer. On the 27th another American Divisional Commander visited the 28th, and it tried to amuse him for a couple of hours; he disliked walking over the frozen earth. A little training was done, and the men got baths. On 28th December a move was made to the charming La Bergerie Camp, which, the ground being hard, was pleasanter than ever.

MAP 13 Large fatigue parties were found nightly to carry wire from the Carrée de Londres to the forward posts; the march to and fro in the dark was the worst part of this entertainment.

The 28th began the year 1918 at La Bergerie and remained there in peace till 4th January, when a move was made to the reserve positions around Boche cross-roads, where the Berkshire was relieved. "A" Company went to Triangular Wood, "B" to the Canal bank, "C" to Wood 16 and "D" to Wood 14. The weather, which showed signs of thaw on the 2nd, had recovered, and the ground was firm and dry.

Next day the left sector of the line was taken over from the 10th Battalion; "B" Company went in on the right at Houchard Farm, and "C" on the left at Papegoed, with "D" in support, and "A" in reserve. The conditions had not altered, and once more there were no casualties, although the hostile shelling had increased. Much patrolling took place, and enemy posts were located at Surcouff and Houart Farms; "C" Company, commanded by Captain Smith who still displayed inexhaustible zeal, was prominent at this work. Towards the end of the tour the weather became bitterly cold owing to strong north-easterly winds, and on 8th January snow fell from 6 a.m. till midday and lay to a depth of several inches. The white covering hid the ravaged earth and adorned the broken trees, and the country between Papegoed and the forest, as seen at sunrise on the 9th from a point below the pill-box, looked tranquilly beautiful. It is improbable, however, that the garrisons of the forward posts on either side, who were more affected than any idle observer from behind, found anything pleasing in the change.

On 9th January the Regiment was relieved by the Munster Fusiliers and withdrew to the reserve positions about Boche cross-roads, where four days were spent. Large working parties were provided every night to carry wire and other stores to Carrée de Londres and to erect wide bands of wire in various places on the front for the purpose of shepherding attackers into

areas that could be swept by artillery and machine-gun fire. The frost broke on the 10th, and the ground was at once a morass; the change was unpopular with the fatigue parties. On the 12th, after relief by the Loyal North Lancashire, La Bergerie Camp was occupied for a night, and next day the Regiment moved to Chauny Camp for a week's training which was of little value owing to the appalling weather. Rain, which began on the 15th and continued incessantly till the night of the 17th, was accompanied by a furious gale; the camp was inches deep in mud, and the leaks in the huts were all discovered; one hut was unroofed by the wind, and the felt was torn from the tops of others. However, the neighbouring camps were much worse off, and it was something to be thankful for that the Regiment was not in the line. One route march took place, and on 19th January a regiment of Belgian Infantry was beaten at soccer by 5 goals to 2. About this time Military Crosses were awarded to Captain Morris, Captain Chamier, Captain Mallet and Regimental Sergeant-Major Brain; each of these real front-line soldiers had done magnificent service during the war.

On 20th January a move was made to the Canal bank near J1 Bridge, which spanned the empty waterway about three-quarters of a mile south of the Lock Keeper's House bridge. The billets consisted of dugouts and shelters either driven into the bank or erected against it and were spread over a distance of 800 yards; they were warm and comfortable, and the amenities of life were well provided for. The 28th had been brought forward, together with the rest of the 3rd Brigade, to work on the "Army Line" which, too late, was being energetically prepared. This fortification was designed after the fashion of the Hindenburg Line and was to be the position of resistance in case the enemy broke through our forward defences; when finished it would be a mass of concrete, combined with numerous deep dugouts. The voluntary retirement, which took place in March in the Ypres neighbourhood in consequence of the German advance farther south, occurred long before the position was ready, so it was never tested; but had a continuous defensive system, of a strength equal to that which the Army line would have possessed when completed, existed at a reasonable distance behind the front line on the Somme, it is unlikely that the enemy would have succeeded there to the extent that he did.

Hard work was required of the Regiment. At first, 400 men

with a proportion of officers and N.C.Os. were employed daily, principally near Tilleul, Mousse, Cormoran, and English Farms; and the varied hours at which the parties went to work made feeding arrangements difficult. Then, for some forgotten reason, "C" and "D" Companies were sent to De Kort Farm near Woesten (they returned on the 25th). Later, "A" Company moved forward and lived most uncomfortably in rickety shelters north of Langemarck while it helped the 28th's old friend, No. 173 Tunnelling Company, to make deep dugouts between the village and Koekuit. This was the very area in which the 28th had been engaged at the beginning of the first Battle of Ypres, but "A" Company's few remaining veterans looked on a changed scene. Gone were the farms, fields, hedges and elm trees that made this part of Flanders so like the English countryside; in their place lay a waste of mud, only relieved by the jagged outlines of shattered pill-boxes and splintered tree-trunks. There was a large German cemetery near Koekuit, and from the dates on the broken crosses its occupants must have been killed while fighting against the 28th. A visit to this detachment by way of the road north of the canal and then along the Ypres-Staden railway took at least five hours there and back, and progress was often interrupted by hostile shelling; but because the Germans nearly always put down their strafes on the same places and shot accurately, the dangerous spots were easy to avoid, and if the worst came to the worst there were plenty of pill-boxes to shelter in on the way. At first the weather was wet, but then a succession of balmy days made the troops think of spring and also improved the conditions of life, particularly for "A" Company.

About this time shortage of men caused the number of battalions in a brigade to be reduced from four to three, and in consequence the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers was transferred to the 16th Division, and the 10th Gloucestershire was disbanded. Ever since they had replaced the 2nd Queen's in the 3rd Brigade, the Munsters had fought alongside the 28th, and everyone deplored the parting, for so many of them, by now, were old friends; the worth of the Regimental Sergeant-Major, Mr. Ring, was particularly appreciated. The disappearance of the 10th Battalion, which had been with the division for two and a half years, was also saddening, though from a purely selfish point of view the 28th benefited, being allotted a hundred of the men

and several officers; naturally Colonel Kirkwood, the commander of the 10th, chose these to the advantage of his 1st Battalion.

The work on the Army Line finished on 8th February, and next day the 3rd Brigade rejoined the 1st Division, from which it had been detached for nearly three weeks. The 28th moved in the morning and reached Caribou Camp, two miles west of Elverdinghe, after a short march on a windy day. The huts were good, but the place was hardly so comfortable as the Canal bank. Training began at once, and though the ground was indifferent, the work served to counteract the effect of weeks of navvying. One result of this navvying was the deterioration of the men's clothing. The consequent large demand for new garments was not received with enthusiasm in high places; it is difficult to understand why, when the importance of renewing the soldier's only suit before it became threadbare is considered. The weather was mainly sunny and fair with frost at night. The Regimental XV practised in preparation for a game with the South Wales Borderers which never took place, and several inter-company soccer games were played. On the 15th an excellent concert was given by the pierrots of a neighbouring Field Ambulance for the benefit of the Regiment.

Brigadier-General H. H. S. Morant had succeeded General Barnett-Barker as commander of the 3rd Brigade, and on the morning of the 15th he made a thorough inspection of the Regiment and the transport. He declared himself well satisfied, and as he evidently knew what he was about, the Regiment was also satisfied. In the afternoon General Strickland looked at various new drafts, principally that from the 10th Battalion; he was still commanding the Division vigorously, and his constant presence among the troops was valuable.

The 1st Division had just taken over the line near Poelcappelle, and the 3rd Brigade moved up to the reserve positions to continue work on the Army Line. The 28th paraded at 5 a.m. on 19th February, a particularly cold morning, and marched to a siding on the light railway, where it embarked in a number of queer little trucks drawn by a tiny engine. The train went very slowly, and when the Regiment detrained at Battle, about a mile north of St. Jean, everyone was frozen stiff. The journey to Kempton Park Camp was continued on foot, and having dumped its kits there, the whole battalion set to work at once on the Army Line, which ran just west of Kitchener's Wood, nearly a mile from the

Camp. Rain began at noon and was coming down in sheets when the drenched troops ceased work and returned hopefully to their new home; but the outgoing unit was still there, so the 28th sat for two long hours awaiting its departure.

Kempton Park Camp was situated one and a half miles from the eastern bank of the Canal and rather over a mile south-east of Pilckem; the name was derived from that given on our maps to the group of buildings that had stood on its site when the ground was German territory. The surrounding country was level, and, to the east, fell gently to the Steenbeek, which here was still confined by its banks, and then rose again more steeply to Poelcappelle.

When, at last, access was gained to the camp, the accommodation was found to be good, and the huts seemed watertight. The whole area was certainly churned up into deep mud, but the main thoroughfares were duckboarded; the fact that much grumbling was caused by the lack of these wooden paths on the lesser routes shows how the conditions of life just behind the line had improved. For this relief the thanks of the troops were due to the commanders and staffs of the higher formations.

Several changes among the officers of the battalion had occurred since they were last enumerated. Major J. R. Guild joined the 28th in December 1917 and assumed the duties of second-in-command; consequently Captain Baxter went back to "A" Company when he returned from the Senior Officers' School later in the month. Major Guild served with the 28th till the end of the war—in the later stages he was in command—and his experience and leadership were invaluable. Captain Baxter, after spending a short time on the staff of the 3rd Brigade, left the 28th in March to join the Machine Gun Corps. He had joined the Regiment about a year before the war began, and, with intervals, served in France while it lasted; as in the case of so many able young regimental officers, only lack of seniority deprived him of a battalion command. Major F. C. Finch came back for a while during February, but it was soon apparent that he had not recovered from the wounds that had laid him up since May 1915; regretfully, therefore, he gave up the unequal contest and returned to England. All these changes had taken place by the time that the Regiment arrived at Kempton Park, at which time Captain Stevenson was still adjutant, and the Company Commanders were: "A," Captain E. Handford;

"B," Captain Mallet; "C," Captain Smith; "D," Captain Seldon. Lieutenant A. M. Stotesbury and Lieutenant G. N. Gosling, though both extremely young, had respectively been in charge of the signallers and the intelligence department for more than a year, with complete success.

The front held by the Division began, on the right, at a point just west of Tournant Farm and ran through Banff House, Tracas Farm and Meunier House to Helles House, which lay a thousandyards from Poelcappelle on the road to Staden, and then through Requete Farm to Compromis Farm, the left of the position. In the event of a hostile attack the Division would be disposed in depth in three areas, two of which were not yet fully prepared; the foremost was the existing front line, the next was on the line Von Tirpitz Farm—New Houses—Pheasant Farm, and the third, behind the Steenbeek, extended from St. Julien on the right to Regina Cross on the left. Each area had considerable depth, and the rear of the hindermost was, roughly, the Army Line. The position was defended by mutually supporting posts including emplacements for Stokes Mortars; the wire, when completed, would be practically impenetrable and would compel attacking troops to move over fire-swept ground. MAP 14

The Army Line here was in a more advanced state than it had been farther north, and the portion lying 400 yards southwest of Kitchener's Wood, on which the 28th was employed, bristled with concrete emplacements. The continuous trenches were rather concrete walls, raised above the ground with foundations below the surface, than the excavations, six or seven feet deep, that the word usually signified; nevertheless they were provided with huge underground dugouts.

Except on 23rd February the whole battalion worked all day on these fortifications; no training was done, though church, bathing and foot-washing parades took place. On 23rd February the men were employed in carrying stores to the forward area, while the officers and section commanders reconnoitred the defences. Company and platoon commanders also examined the position several times.

There were excellent routes to the line from Kempton Park, so reconnaissance was easy, though it entailed many hours of walking. Three roads, one a very roundabout way from Ypres to Gravenstafel which, near Ypres, bore the name of Boundary Road, another that from St. Julien to Poelcappelle and the third

that from Langemarck to Zonnebeke, formed a small triangle about a thousand yards north of St. Julien. Boundary Road, in good repair, passed close to Kempton Park and was the 28th's principal means of access to the line. On the way forward it skirted the north-west edge of Kitchener's Wood, crossed the Steenbeek and joined the St. Julien-Poelcappelle road about half a mile farther on, the junction forming the western angle of the wooded Triangle, where five or six derelict tanks, relics of the capture of Poelcappelle, lay in awkward attitudes among the trees. The route then followed the Poelcappelle road, which climbed the spur on which the village stood. From the northern angle of the Triangle, the Langemarck road, in the concealment of whose bordering trees one or two batteries were generally in action, ran up the valley to the left. In addition to the road two good duckboard tracks, situated on its western side, were easily accessible from the Camp; Grouse Avenue led right into Poelcappelle through Pheasant Farm, Rose Cottage and Norfolk House; Gloucester Avenue, having crossed the road half a mile north of the Triangle, led to various posts east of the village. Both tracks ran over the usual mud heap, pitted with shell-holes and dotted here and there with pill-boxes and German cemeteries.

There was a good deal of shelling during the day, and frequent fights took place in the air. On one occasion a British aeroplane was shot down close to the Camp; its pilot was unhurt though his machine buried its nose deep in the mud. The weather varied; after a wet start, several warm still days culminated on 28th February in a delicious afternoon with all the birds a-singing. Then an easterly gale, which tore through the sides and floors of the huts and made it impossible to keep warm, led up to a snow-storm on March 2nd, after which the cold decreased. A visit to Ypres on the morning of the 27th, a pleasant day, was interesting, particularly as it was made in company with Major Guild, who had known the town early in 1915, before its destruction. He could point out where the restaurants and hotels, which then were doing a roaring trade, had stood, on sites that now were grass-grown heaps of rubble, and could recall the various beautiful ladies that had ministered to the customers. He could tell how, nightly, transport had galloped through the town and the Menin Gate, dodging 14-inch shells as it went, to supply the 61st, out on the Menin Road beyond. The contrast to the Ypres of June 1917 was also notable, for then the streets were

empty while now they were thronged with a busy crowd; in the Square a foreigner in mufti, whose half-finished picture proved him to be an artist of distinction, sat painting the ruins.

On 4th March, a mild wet day, the Regiment relieved the 1st Cameron Highlanders on the left of the Divisional front, from Meunier House on the right to Compromis Farm on the left. Poelcappelle was the key of the position. Unlike its fellows, which had vanished except perhaps for a heap of stones that marked the site of the church, the village still remained, although its form had changed; the concrete forts that the enemy had built inside its ruins had been stripped of their brick coverings and stood exposed, grey and massive, on the ridge. The effect was awe-inspiring; the impression of strength that the place gave was not belied by its power to resist shell fire. The chief building, once the Brewery, was now a huge oblong mound, off which the largest projectile bounced in fragments. Many houses near the village had been similarly fortified and were used as platoon posts.

The line was held with three companies in front and one in support. "A" Company on the right had one platoon in Meunier House, one in a concrete building near the site of the church and its Headquarters and two platoons at Gloster Farm, which lay 800 yards south of the Brewery. "C," in the centre, had its Headquarters and one platoon in the Brewery and another in an earthwork on the road from Poelcappelle to Westroosebeke; the third was at Helles House on the Poelcappelle-Staden road, and the fourth was at Nobles Farm between the roads. Each of these posts was about 400 yards in front of the Brewery. The Headquarters of "D" Company, on the left, was at Ferdan House, 500 yards west of where the church had been. Two platoons were at Requette Farm, 200 yards north-west of Helles House, one was at String Houses, and one at Compromis Farm, respectively 600 and 900 yards north-west of the Brewery. Battalion Headquarters was at Norfolk House, a quarter of a mile along the Langemarck road. "B," the support company, was in the western part of Pheasant Trench, which lay on the reverse slope, half-way between Norfolk House and the Triangle. Meunier, the earthwork east of the Brewery, Nobles, Helles and Requette were the forward posts, behind which lay the Brewery; the next line consisted of Gloster Farm, the post near the Church, String and Compromis, and finally came Norfolk and Ferdan.

Positions were allotted to the support company in case of need.

In addition to the pill-boxes, the posts were protected by wire, to strengthen which continual work was necessary, and by entrenchments; they were so placed that the fire from each would not only cover the ground over which an enemy must advance but would also give support to its neighbours. Altogether the position was immensely strong, though darkness or fog at once diminished its strength by a half.

The system of duckboard tracks was unusually complete. Grouse Track led from Pheasant Trench, through Norfolk House, to Helles House, with subsidiary tracks leading off to the post by the Church and to the Brewery. From the Brewery a track led to Nobles Farm. From Norfolk House a track led across to Gloucester Avenue, which ran through Gloster Farm to Meunier House. On the left a track started from the Langemarck road near Norfolk House and ran through Ferdan House to Requette Farm, with a branch leading to String Houses and Compromis Farm. Visits in daylight to the forward posts were undesirable, and at night, even with the aid of the excellent tracks, a complete tour took several hours.

Norfolk House made a good headquarters, though it was overcrowded; in front a kind of quarter-deck protected by sandbags gave a fine view over much of the line. The weather was fine, and hostile fire was slight; the enemy had certain favourite spots on the duckboards at which his machine guns shot, but his regularity made it easy to elude the danger.

Very early in the morning of 7th March the Germans tried to raid Meunier House. A quick but heavy barrage of 4.5's and 5.9's was put down, and then the infantry advanced. Most of the garrison were busy at the wire, and the sudden bombardment killed three and wounded five of them; the others occupied the trench and drove off the raiders. Lieutenant I. J. Warren, the Platoon Commander, died of his wounds next day; he had done good service with the 28th for nearly a year. One of the dead was not brought in that night, and the fears of Higher Authority lest the enemy should have got an "identification" were only calmed when the body was found next evening on the wire.

On 8th March the Regiment was relieved by the 2nd Welch and withdrew to the support positions, where it was scattered over a wide area. "A" and "B" Companies were in Dimple Trench, which started a little south of Von Tirpitz Farm and

ran north-west for about 700 yards; one platoon was divided between Wellington and Winchester Farms, 1,400 yards north-east of the trench. "C" and "D" Companies were in the eastern part of Pheasant Trench with a platoon at Bavaroise House, 500 yards farther east. Headquarters was in a collection of flat-topped pill-boxes at Hugel Hollow on the south bank of the Steenbeek, close to Alberta Track; it was nearly equi-distant from the two trenches, but was a long way from each. Although the pill-boxes at Hugel Hollow were very wet, the troops were, on the whole, comfortably housed, and the delightful weather increased their comfort.

Before going into the line the 28th had been warned that it would be required to do a raid on 12th March and that Cameron Houses, a hostile post lying north-east of Meunier House, had been selected as the objective. While the Regiment was in the line the area had been constantly patrolled with little result, and now, in support, the daylight hours were spent in journeying to places from which the post might possibly be seen, but to get a good view of it proved impossible; the best idea of the ground was gained from the neighbourhood of Wallemolen.

MAP 11

Owing to the proposed raid only two days were spent in support, and on the 10th the Regiment again relieved the 2nd Welch in the line. Since "B" Company was to provide the raiding party, it was kept in support, and the positions of the other companies were unchanged. On the evening of the 10th the ground near Cameron Houses was examined by patrols composed of men who would do the attack, and on the afternoon of the 11th a final rehearsal was carried out in the valley west of the Triangle. But the raid never took place. There was on the Westroosebeke road a German earthwork. On the evening of the 11th a patrol of "C" Company was examining the ground near it, and stirred perhaps by the feeling of spring in the air, worked round its flank and whisked away a sergeant-major and three men. The desired identification having thus been gained, the Divisional Commander stopped the attack on Cameron Houses.

MAP 14

The rest of the spell in front passed uneventfully in weather so balmy that all the living trees and bushes were coloured faintly green, and the dreary landscape was endowed with life and colour; during the daily tour of the line, to sit and eat the midday meal beside a shell-hole was no longer a penance. The

shelling had increased, particularly at night, and much of it was gas; it was no uncommon thing, when toiling over some uneven short cut in the darkness, to be suddenly beset by a flurry of these softly plopping shells.

Four days were spent in the line, and on 14th March the South Wales Borderers relieved the 28th, and the latter went back in support, with each company in the same place as before. To account for the queer pill-boxes at Headquarters is difficult, for they were so close to the bank of the stream, to which the ground sloped steeply, that the Germans could have got little or no field of fire from them.

On 16th March the Regiment was relieved by the 1st Northamptonshire and withdrew to the huts at Kempton Park, where it remained till 28th March; "B" Company was left in support to the troops in the line and occupied Cat House and the left of Pheasant Trench. The glorious weather continued for some time, and though little training was done, everyone was kept busy. After nearly a fortnight in the line, much cleaning and reviewing of clothes and equipment were necessary. Regular work on the Army Line took place by day, and at night large parties were provided to bury cables for the Sappers.

CHAPTER XIV

REFLECTIONS

ON 24th March the writer was sent elsewhere and was thus deprived of his share in the last deeds of the 28th, which bear comparison with any that preceded them.

Service with a good infantry battalion in France was the highest thing attainable during the years 1914 to 1918, and it is a pity that the life has generally been described by people whose outlook differed from that of the ordinary man. The feature of most books on the subject is the ever-lasting analysis of the effect on their writers' minds of the horrors of war, the phrase "horrors of war" signifying the periods of acute fear and extreme discomfort that war must from time to time inflict on all who take part in it. In reality "the horrors" were forgotten as soon as they were over; time was rarely wasted in sickly introspection.

The good comradeship and enjoyment of life that existed, the courage, good will and cheerfulness of the men in the ranks, the endurance of the fighting type of company and platoon commander and the care for the troops on the part of the higher commanders and their staffs are, apart from actual events, the principal impressions left by long association with the 28th in war.

APPENDIX I

LOCATIONS AND MOVES 1st GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

15.1.15 TO 28.3.18

<i>Date</i>		<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Friday	15.1.15	Line—Givenchy	—	3
Wednesday	3.2.15	Marles-les-Mines	Béthune—Labeuvriere— Lapugnoy	1
Wednesday	24.2.15	Ecole des Jeunes Filles, Bethune	Lapugnoy—Labeuvriere	1, 2
Thursday	25.2.15	Line—Festubert	Gorre	1, 3
Sunday	7.3.15	Gorre (two companies in Tuning Fork)	—	1
Sunday	14.3.15	Hinges	Béthune	1
Monday	22.3.15	Rouge Croix (on La Bassée—Estaires road)	Le Vertbois Farm—Vieille Chapelle	1
Tuesday	23.3.15	Line—Neuve Chapelle	—	4
Friday	26.3.15	Support—Neuve Chapelle	—	4
Wednesday	31.3.15	Line—Port Arthur	—	4
Thursday	8.4.15	Farms west of Locon	Windy Corner—Lacouture	1, 4
Thursday	15.4.15	Line—Richebourg l'Avoué	Lacouture—Windy Corner	1, 4
Thursday	22.4.15	Le Touret (two companies at Richebourg St. Vaast)	—	1
Saturday	24.4.15	Hinges	Locon	1
Monday	3.5.15	Béthune—Locon road, south of Locon	—	1
Friday	7.5.15	Lannoy and Gonneghem	Hinges—Le Vertannoy	1
Saturday	8.5.15	Line—Richebourg l'Avoué	Hinges—Locon—Lacouture— Windy Corner	1, 4
Monday	10.5.15	Farms west of Locon	Le Touret—Lacouture	1
Wednesday	12.5.15	Line—Cuinchy Brick- stacks, Sector A1	Béthune—Beuvry—Cambrin— Harley Street	1, 3
Friday	14.5.15	Line—South of Béthune— La Bassée road, Sector Z2	Harley Street—Cambrin— La Bourse—Cambrin	1, 5
Tuesday	18.5.15	Cambrin (one company in dugouts in a bank north-west of Maison Rouge)	—	1, 5
Thursday	20.5.15	Tobacco Factory, Béthune	Beuvry	1, 2
Friday	21.5.15	Line—Cuinchy Brick- stacks, Sector A1	Beuvry—Cambrin—Harley Street	1, 3
Tuesday	25.5.15	La Bourse	Cambrin—Annequin—Chat- eau des Pres	1
Saturday	29.5.15	Line—South of Béthune— La Bassée road, Sector Y4	Chateau des Pres—Anne- quin—Cambrin	1, 5

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Wednesday	2.6.15	Montmorency Barracks, Béthune	Beuvry	1, 2
Friday	4.6.15	Annequin (one company at Cambrin)	Beuvry	1
Thursday	10.6.15	Tobacco Factory, Béthune	Beuvry	1, 2
Thursday	24.6.15	Cauchy a la Tour	Fouquereuil-Labeuvriere-Lapugnoy-Marles-Auchel	1
Monday	28.6.15	Line—South of Béthune—La Bassée road, Sector Y1 (Le Rutoire) (dinners near Houchin, tea at Chateau des Pres.)	Auchel - Marles - Labuis-siere-Noeux-les-Mines-Sailly la Bourse-Vermelles.	1, 5
Friday	2.7.15	La Bourse	Vermelles-Sailly la Bourse	1
Monday	5.7.15	Labeuvriere	Hesdigneul	1
Tuesday	13.7.15	Annequin (one company at Cambrin and one Company in dugouts in a bank north-west of Maison Rouge; latter company had one platoon in Railway Keep)	Béthune-Beuvry	1, 5
Monday	19.7.15	Line—South of Béthune—La Bassée road, Sector Z2	—	5
Sunday	25.7.15	Verquin	Cambrin - Chateau des Pres-La Bourse	1
Saturday	31.7.15	Vermelles	La Bourse-Sailly La Bourse	1
Wednesday	4.8.15	Line—South of Béthune—La Bassée road, Sector Y1 (Le Rutoire)	—	5
Thursday	12.8.15	Faubourg D'Arras and Orphanage, Béthune	Sailly La Bourse-Beuvry	1, 2
Wednesday	18.8.15	Line—South of Béthune—La Bassée road, Sector Z1	Beuvry-Cambrin	1, 5
Sunday	22.8.15	Annequin Fosse (one company in the line in support)	—	1
Wednesday	1.9.15	Garden City, Fouquereuil	Beuvry-Béthune	1
Thursday	2.9.15	Cauchy a la Tour	Labeuvriere-Lapugnoy-Marles-Auchel	1
Monday	6.9.15	Bivouac in new reserve line west of Mazingarbe; dinners near Hesdigneul	Marles-Bois des Dames-Hesdigneul - Vaudricourt-La Bourse	1
Tuesday	7.9.15	Line—South of Béthune—La Bassée road, Sector Y1 (Le Rutoire)	Vermelles	1, 5
Monday	13.9.15	Philosophie	Vermelles	1

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Tuesday	21.9.15	Bivouac in new reserve line west of Mazingarbe	—	1
Wednesday	22.9.15	Vaudricourt Wood	Verquin	1
Saturday	25.9.15	Line (Battle of Loos)	Verquin - Philosophe - Vermelles	1, 5
Thursday	30.9.15	Noeux-les-Mines	Vermelles-Mazingarbe	1
Tuesday	5.10.15	Line—Chalk Pit at Loos	Mazingarbe - Philosophe—Quality Street—Loos	1, 5
Friday	8.10.15	Support—East of the Loos—La Bassée road	—	5
Tuesday	12.10.15	Line—Chalk Pit at Loos	—	5
Wednesday	13.10.15	Support—East of the Loos—La Bassée road	—	5
Thursday	14.10.15	Mazingarbe	Quality Street—Philosophe	1
Friday	15.10.15	Allouagne	Noeux-les-Mines (march)—Lillers (rail) and then march	1
Tuesday	19.10.15	Cauchy a la Tour	—	1
Monday	15.11.15	Noeux-les-Mines (Bracquemont)	Marles—Labuissiere	1
Friday	19.11.15	Support—Gun Alley and Loos Alley	Mazingarbe—Philosophe—Quality Street	1, 6
Monday	22.11.15	Line—Chalk Pit at Loos	—	6
Friday	26.11.15	Support—Gun Alley and Loos Alley (one company forward in close support)	—	6
Tuesday	30.11.15	Line—Chalk Pit at Loos	—	6
Friday	3.12.15	Mazingarbe	Quality Street and Philosophe	1
Wednesday	8.12.15	Support—Old German Line north and south of Vermelles—Hulluch road	Philosophe—Vermelles	1, 6
Saturday	11.12.15	Line—North and South of Vermelles—Hulluch road	—	6
Tuesday	14.12.15	Philosophe—(two companies in support line north and south of Vermelles - Hulluch road)	Vermelles	6
Friday	17.12.15	Line—North and south of Vermelles—Hulluch road	Vermelles	6
Monday	20.12.15	Noeux-les-Mines (Bracquemont)	Vermelles - Philosophe - Mazingarbe	1
Sunday	26.12.15	Philosophe (East)	Mazingarbe	1
Saturday	1.1.16	Line—Chalk Pit at Loos	Quality Street	6

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Tuesday	4.1.16	Support—Gun Alley and Loos Alley	—	6
Friday	7.1.16	Philosophie (East)	Quality Street	1
Thursday	13.1.16	Raimbert	Marched to Nocux-Les-Mines via Mazingarbe. By train to Lillers. Then marched via Burbure	1
Sunday	16.1.16	Cauchy a la Tour	—	1
Monday	14.2.16	Line—Loos Sector	Marched via Raimbert to Lillers. By train to Noeux - les - Mines. Then marched via Mazingarbe—Les Brebis—Maroc	1, 6
Thursday	17.2.16	Support—O.G.1, South Street and Maroc	—	6
Sunday	20.2.16	Line—Loos Sector	—	6
Wednesday	23.2.16	Les Brébis (Church Area)	—	1
Friday	3.3.16	Line—Maroc Sector	—	6
Monday	6.3.16	Les Brébis (Church Area)	—	1
Thursday	9.3.16	Line—Maroc Sector	—	6
Sunday	12.3.16	Support—South Maroc	—	6
Wednesday	15.3.16	Les Brébis (Southern Area)	—	1
Tuesday	21.3.16	Line—Loos Sector	Maroc	1, 6
Friday	24.3.16	Support—North Maroc	Maroc	6
Monday	27.3.16	Line—Loos Sector	Maroc	6
Thursday	30.3.16	Support—O.G.1, South Street, Enclosure, Houses East of Loos Crassier	—	6
Sunday	2.4.16	Petit Sains	Maroc—Les Brébis	1, 6
Saturday	8.4.16	Line—Maroc Sector	Les Brébis—Maroc	1, 6
Tuesday	11.4.16	Support—South Maroc	—	6
Friday	14.4.16	Line—Maroc Sector	—	6
Monday	17.4.16	Support—South Maroc (one company in Maroc cellars)	—	6
Thursday	20.4.16	Les Brébis (Southern Area). (One platoon at Lens Road, Redoubt)	—	1, 6
Wednesday	26.4.16	Line—Loos Sector	Maroc	1, 6
Saturday	29.4.16	Support—North Maroc	Maroc	6
Tuesday	2.5.16	Line—Loos Sector	Maroc	6
Friday	5.5.16	Support—O.G.1. and enclosure (one company in South Street and one company in Queen Street in close support to 6th Welch in line)	—	6

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Monday	8.5.16	Les Brébis (Southern Area)	Maroc	1, 6
Saturday	13.5.16	Line—Maroc Sector	Maroc	1, 6
Friday	19.5.16	Support—Maroc, O.G.1, South Street	—	6
Thursday	25.5.16	Les Brébis (Northern Area)	—	1, 6
Friday	2.6.16	Line—Calonne Sector	Calonne	1, 6
Tuesday	6.6.16	Support — Headquarter Street, North Calonne (two companies in close support to battalions in the line)	—	6
Saturday	10.6.16	Line—Calonne Sector	—	6
Wednesday	14.6.16	Bully-Grenay	Calonne	1, 6
Tuesday	20.6.16	Line—Calonne Sector	Calonne	1, 6
Thursday	22.6.16	Les Brébis (Church Area)	Calonne	1, 6
Tuesday	4.7.16	Bruay	Noeux-les-Mines - Ruitz	1
Thursday	6.7.16	Doullens	March to Chocques, then by rail via St. Pol	1, 7, 15
Friday	7.7.16	Beauval (bivouac)	—	7
Friday	7.7.16	Vignaucourt	Talmas-Flesselles	7
Saturday	8.7.16	Rainneville	Flesselles-Villers Bocage	7
Sunday	9.7.16	Franvillers	St. Gratien-Frechencourt	7
Monday	10.7.16	Albert	Heilly - Buire - Dernancourt	7
Friday	14.7.16	Contalmaison	Bécourt Wood	7, 8
Monday	17.7.16	Captured German line north of Contalmaison. Both sides of Contalmaison - Martinpuich road	—	8
Tuesday	18.7.16	Scott's Redoubt	Contalmaison	8
Wednesday	19.7.16	Bécourt Wood	—	7
Thursday	20.7.16	Albert	—	7
Saturday	22.7.16	O.G.1	Bécourt Wood	8
Sunday	23.7.16	O.B.2	—	8
Monday	24.7.16	Line — North - west of Contalmaison - Martinpuich road	—	8
Tuesday	25.7.16	Scott's Redoubt	Contalmaison	8
Wednesday	26.7.16	Millencourt	Bécourt Wood-Albert	7
Tuesday	15.8.16	Railway Copse	South of Albert-Black Wood-Bécourt Wood	7, 8
Wednesday	16.8.16	Black Wood	Bécourt Wood	7
Sunday	20.8.16	Line—immediately west of High Wood	Bécourt Wood-Mametz Wood	8
Monday	28.8.16	Bécourt Wood	Caterpillar Valley	7, 8
Wednesday	30.8.16	Albert	—	7
Saturday	2.9.16	Quadrangle	Bécourt Wood	7, 8
Tuesday	5.9.16	Bazentin Le Grand	Caterpillar Valley	8
Friday	8.9.16	Line—High Wood	—	8
Saturday	9.9.16	Quadrangle	Caterpillar Valley	8

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Monday	11.9.16	Henencourt Wood	Bécourt Wood—Albert— Millencourt	7
Tuesday	12.9.16	Franvillers	Baizieux	7
Friday	15.9.16	Henencourt Wood	Baizieux	7
Monday	18.9.16	Black Wood	Millencourt—Albert	7
Tuesday	19.9.16	Bazentin Le Grand	Bécourt Wood — Cater- pillar Valley	7, 8
Wednesday	20.9.16	East side of Mametz Wood	—	7
Monday	25.9.16	Black Wood	Bécourt Wood	7
Thursday	28.9.16	Millencourt	Albert	7
Friday	29.9.16	Henencourt Wood	—	7
Tuesday	3.10.16	Feuquieres	Marched to junction of Albert — Amiens and Baizieux — Ribemont roads. Then by bus via Amiens—Abbeville	7, 15
Tuesday	31.10.16	Baizieux	March to main Eu—Abbe- ville road. By bus via Amiens to junction of Amiens — Albert and Ribemont — Baizieux roads. Then march.	7, 15
Sunday	5.11.16	Millencourt	Henencourt	7
Friday	10.11.16	Camp—Southern end of Mametz Wood (tents)	Albert—Bécourt Wood	7
Tuesday	21.11.16	High Wood Camp West (huts)	Bazentin le Petit	9
Monday	27.11.16	Line — Eaucourt l'Ab- baye, left Sector	High Wood	9
Friday	1.12.16	High Wood Camp East (huts)	—	9
Tuesday	5.12.16	Bazentin le Petit Camp (huts). (Two companies in support in Old Ger- man line between Eau- court l'Abbaye and Flers)	—	9
Sunday	10.12.16	Camp—Southern end of Mametz Wood (tents)	Caterpillar Valley	7
Thursday	14.12.16	Line—Eaucourt l'Abbaye Right Sector	Caterpillar Valley and High Wood	7, 9
Monday	18.12.16	Bazentin le Petit Camp (huts)	High Wood	9
Friday	22.12.16	Support—Eaucourt l'Ab- baye Sector	High Wood	9
Tuesday	26.12.16	High Wood Camp West (huts)	High Wood	9
Friday	29.12.16	Bécourt Camp (east of Bécourt Wood). (Two Companies at Meaulte until 3.1.17)	North of Mametz Wood— east of Contalmaison	7

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Tuesday	23.1.17	Contay	Albert - Baizieux - Vaden-court	7
Friday	2.2.17	Morcourt	Baizieux - Ribemont - Saily Laurette - Cerisy	7
Monday	5.2.17	Camp (huts)—Bois Olympe, south of Cappy	Meri-court—Froissy	7
Tuesday	6.2.17	Line—Barleux, Left Sector	Cappy - Herbecourt - Flaucourt	7, 10
Saturday	10.2.17	Support—Flaucourt	—	10
Wednesday	14.2.17	Line—Barleux, Centre Sector	—	10
Sunday	18.2.17	Telegraph Camp, north-west of Dompierre	Dompierre	7
Wednesday	21.2.17	Line—Barleux, Centre Sector	Dompierre—Flaucourt	7, 10
Friday	23.2.17	Chuignes	Flaucourt—Dompierre	7, 10
Sunday	4.3.17	Great Wood	Dompierre—Assevillers	7, 10
Wednesday	7.3.17	Line—Barleux, Right Sector	—	10
Sunday	11.3.17	Assevillers	Great Wood	7, 10
Thursday	15.3.17	Line—Barleux, Right Sector	Great Wood	7, 10
Saturday	17.3.17	Villers—Carbonell (German retirement)	—	10
Sunday	18.3.17	Boulogne Wood	—	10
Tuesday	20.3.17	Chuignes	Assevillers—Dompierre	7
Saturday	7.4.17	Peronne	Dompierre - Assevillers - Barleux	7
Monday	16.4.17	Bellevue Farm	—	7
Monday	7.5.17	Eclusier	Barleux - Flaucourt - Herbecourt	7
Saturday	19.5.17	Warfusee	Cappy—Proyart	7
Sunday	27.5.17	Caestre	Marched to Guillaucourt. Then by rail via Amiens—Abbeville—Boulogne—Calais—St. Omer—Haze-brouck	7, 11, 15
Sunday	27.5.17	Camp—North of Fletre—Meteren Road (tents)	Caestre—Fletre	11
Friday	1.6.17	Camp—West of Reninghelst (tents)	Mont Noir - Westoutre—Reninghelst	11
Wednesday	6.6.17	Camp—North of Fletre—Meteren Road (tents)	Reninghelst - Westoutre—Mont Noir	11
Saturday	9.6.17	Camp at Dickebusch Lake (tents)	Berthen—M, Y and W Routes—Millekruise	11
Friday	15.6.17	Hondeghem	Millekruise—W, Y and M Routes—Berthen—Fletre—Caestre	11
Saturday	16.6.17	Staple	—	11
Thursday	21.6.17	Wormhoudt	Les Trois Rois—Zuytpeene—Wemaers Cappel	11
Friday	22.6.17	Malo Les Bains	Tax—Galghoeck	11

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Monday	25.6.17	St. Iddesbalde	Marched to Leffrinkehoucke Bridge. By barge to Furnes and thence by marching	11
Tuesday	3.7.17	Bador Camp (huts); "B" Company to Le Clipon Camp	Coxysde Bains	11
Wednesday	4.7.17	Juriac Camp (huts); "C" Company to Le Clipon Camp on Friday, 6.7.17	Across country	11
Tuesday	17.7.17	Leffrinkehoucke	La Panne-Adinkerke	11
Wednesday	18.7.17	Camp—two miles north-west of Petit Synthe	Dunkerque-St. Pol.	11
Thursday	19.7.17	Le Clipon Camp	—	11
Saturday	20.10.17	Eringhem	Boomstraete - Spicker - Grand Millebrugghes - Le Hieppe	11
Sunday	21.10.17	Rubrouck	—	11
Thursday	25.10.17	Billets south of Houtkerque	Zeggers-Cappel - Esquelbecq-Wormhoudt - Herzeele	11
Tuesday	6.11.17	Dambré Camp (huts)	Poperinghe - Vlamertinghe	11
Wednesday	7.11.17	Support — Kronprinz Farm	St. Jean-Wieltje	11, 12
Saturday	10.11.17	Line—Goudberg	—	12
Sunday	11.11.17	Yser Canal Bank, close to Ypres (dugouts)	Wieltje-St. Jean	11
Tuesday	13.11.17	Dambré Camp (huts) (two companies at Wurst Farm in close support, 18-22.11.17)	—	11, 12
Friday	23.11.17	Schools Camp (huts)	Vlamertinghe - North Switch Road	11
Tuesday	27.11.17	Proosdy Camp (huts), north of Proven	Proven	11
Wednesday	5.12.17	Eikhoek Camp (huts)	South of Crombeke	11
Friday	7.12.17	La Bergerie Camp (shelters and dugouts)	North of Woesten	11
Tuesday	11.12.17	Reserve—Boche Cross-roads	Bridge north of Lock Keeper's House	11, 13
Wednesday	12.12.17	Line—Houthulst Wood	—	13
Sunday	16.12.17	Reserve—Boche Cross-roads	—	13
Wednesday	19.12.17	Reninghoe Camp (huts)	Bridge north of Lock Keeper's House-North of Woesten	11
Thursday	20.12.17	Chauny Camp (huts)	Eikhoek Camp—East of Crombeke	11
Friday	21.12.17	Zuidhuis Camp (huts)	East of Crombeke	11
Friday	28.12.17	La Bergerie Camp	North of Woesten	11

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Map</i>
Friday	4.1.18	Reserve—Boche Cross-roads	Bridge north of Lock Keeper's House	11, 13
Saturday	5.1.18	Line—Houthulst Wood	—	13
Wednesday	9.1.18	Reserve—Boche Cross-roads	—	13
Saturday	12.1.18	La Bergerie Camp	Bridge north of Lock Keeper's House	11
Sunday	13.1.18	Chauny Camp	North of Woesten—Eikhoek—East of Crombeke	11
Sunday	20.1.18	Canal Bank, J1 Bridge (shelters and dugouts) (two companies at De Kort Camp, 22-25.1.18 also one company at Langemarck for a few days)	Woesten	11
Saturday	9.2.18	Caribou Camp (huts)	Elverdinghe - Dromore Corner	11
Tuesday	19.2.18	Kempton Park Camp (huts)	By light railway to Battle and then march	11
Monday	4.3.18	Line—Poelcappelle	—	14
Friday	8.3.18	Support—Hugel Hollows	—	14
Sunday	10.3.18	Line—Poelcappelle	—	14
Thursday	14.3.18	Support—Hugel Hollows	—	14
Saturday	16.3.18	Kempton Park Camp (one company in close support in Pheasant Trench) 220 moves in 1163 days. A move every 5.28 days.	—	14

APPENDIX II

COMPOSITION OF A BATTALION FOR THE PROPOSED LANDING WEST OF OSTEND IN THE SUMMER OF 1917

(*See Chapter XI*)

	<i>Officers</i>	<i>Other Ranks</i>
Battalion Headquarters	6	65
Four Companies (each of 5 officers and 165 other ranks)	20	660
Total	<u>26</u>	<u>725</u>

Battalion Headquarters—

Commanding Officer, Second-in-Command, Adjutant, Signalling Officer, Intelligence Officer, Medical Officer, Regimental Sergeant-Major, Regimental Quartermaster-Sergeant, 4 Company Quartermaster-Sergeants, 16 signallers, 12 runners, 4 observers, 1 cook, 6 officers' servants, 6 medical personnel, 8 stretcher-bearers, 4 pioneers, 2 storemen.

Company Headquarters—

Company Commander, Company Sergeant-Major, 5 signallers, 4 runners, 2 scouts, 1 observer, 1 cook, 1 officer's servant, 4 stretcher-bearers, 2 sanitary men.

Platoon—

Platoon Commander, Platoon Sergeant, 2 runners, 1 officer's servant, four sections each consisting of a section commander and 7 men.

88 Hand-Carts were allotted to each battalion.

Each rifleman would carry ashore 170 rounds of ball ammunition and would dump 100 of them after landing. Six men of each Lewis gun section would carry 4 drums of ammunition apiece, making a total of 24 drums for each gun. Each rifle grenadier would carry ashore 70 rounds of ball ammunition and 10 rifle grenades; he would dump 5 rifle grenades. Each bomber would carry ashore 120 rounds of ball ammunition and 16 Mills bombs, of which he would dump 50 rounds of ball ammunition and 8 bombs. (There is no record of the number of men detailed as rifle grenadiers and bombers).

The average strength of the 28th during the time spent in Le Clipon Camp was over 900 of all ranks.

APPENDIX III

RUGBY FOOTBALL MATCHES PLAYED IN FRANCE, 1915 TO 1917

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Opponent</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Score</i>
Oct. 17, 1915	Allouagne	2nd Welch	Won	5 points to 0
Oct. 28, 1915	Burbure	1st. S.W.B.	Won	20 points to 0
Nov. 3, 1915	Cauchy	6th Welch	Won	8 points to 5
Nov. 6, 1915	Cauchy	Capt. Lyttelton's XV	Won	6 points to 5
Nov. 13, 1915	Cauchy	6th Welch	Won	3 points to 0
Jan. 19, 1916	Cauchy	2nd Welch	Drawn	No score
Jan. 23, 1916	Cauchy	26th Brigade R.F.A.	Won	54 points to 0
Jan. 26, 1916	Cauchy	1st Divisional Train	Won	16 points to 5
Jan. 30, 1916	Cauchy	6th Welch	Lost	0 points to 17
Feb. 2, 1916	Cauchy	8th Gloucestershire	Drawn	No score
Oct. 17, 1916	Feuquieres	2nd R.M.F.	Won	9 points to 0
Oct. 18, 1916	Feuquieres	3rd M.G. Company	Won	37 points to 0
Oct. 28, 1916	Feuquieres	1st S.W.B.	Won	9 points to 7
Mar. 1, 1917	Chuignes	2nd Welch	Won	3 points to 0
Apr. 3, 1917	Chuignes	1st S.W.B.	Won	26 points to 0
Apr. 26, 1917	Peronne	Casualty Clearing Station	Won	55 points to 0
May 3, 1917	Peronne	Warwickshire Brigade	Won	29 points to 0
May 14, 1917	Eclusier	2nd R.M.F.	Won	14 points to 0
May 18, 1917	Eclusier	2nd Welch	Won	6 points to 0
July 2, 1917	St. Idessbalde	Australian Heavy Artillery Brigade	Won	11 points to 3
July 7, 1917	Juriac	10th Gloucestershire	Won	29 points to 0
Aug. 21, 1917	Le Clipon	3rd M.G. Company	Won	23 points to 0
Aug. 31, 1917	Le Clipon	2nd Welch	Won	6 points to 0
Sept. 6, 1917	Le Clipon	1st S.W.B.	Won	13 points to 0
Sept. 22, 1917	Le Clipon	2nd R.M.F.	Won	21 points to 0
Oct. 1, 1917	Le Clipon	2nd/60th	Won	13 points to 0

Won 23. Drew 2. Lost 1.
416 points scored, against 42.

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